

On the one hand, it was necessary in most negotiations with the operators and their architects to provide some insight into the overall planning.

The technical investigations, preliminary work for the development and supply of the industrial and commercial areas, and surveying were the responsibility of various municipal departments. The city was also responsible for drawing up the development plans for partial development plans and the subsequent approval process. The construction planning by the companies through their freely chosen architects was carried out in close consultation with the department and was then approved and monitored in accordance with local procedures. The awarding and execution of the construction work was not subject to any influence.

The industrial relocations were financed by the companies themselves on a private-sector basis, with only the compensation payments for the existing land and buildings being made available from the redevelopment fund. Detailed guidelines had been drawn up for this purpose. In addition to generosity towards the companies, however, thrift was again called for in order not to divert too much funding from the actual redevelopment, which was aimed at urban restructuring, the expansion of extensive rail transport facilities, the motorway ring road and feeder road structures, the generous residential buildings and the city's cultural buildings, which could also only be financed with support from the state and the Reich. The party was confident that, over a period of almost two decades, it would be able to raise the funds for its buildings from its own resources, buildings that would then justify Munich's nickname as the "capital of the movement."

It was clear to the authorities, the industrial planning department, and all the companies affected by the relocation that the compensation payments alone would not be enough to build the new factories. However, the plant managers were aware that instead of the old, mostly already depreciated facilities, they would now have modern, generously dimensioned workplaces and be able to offer their workforce better working conditions, factors that would only bring them advantages in the future. However, it was necessary to secure bridging finance from financial institutions. Various companies considered foregoing reconstruction and using the proceeds from the settlement for other purposes. This option was also available.

Of course, it must be recognized that the procedure described above, which was necessary. The plan for the redevelopment of an urban organism on this scale constituted an encroachment on private enterprise and private rights. However, it was in line with the National Socialist view that, for the sake of an orderly, urban, humane city design, the common good of a community should take precedence over the interests of the individual; and ultimately, no form of government can avoid this.

Adolf Hitler justifies the planning of the new residential areas

Of particular importance for Munich are the locations, the planning and the individual design of the apartments in the new residential areas are of particular importance for Munich. Giesler, make sure that the locations are in reasonable proximity to workplaces, transportation, green spaces, but also to the traditional city center! The new residential areas should form independent, manageable units within the motorway ring, but they must not be isolated; rather, they must be perceived as part of the city as a whole.

Adolf Hitler told me this, and he gave me further instructions. The overall form of the residential area and the individual buildings must correspond to both our social community and the atmosphere of Munich. When integrating the residential areas into the cityscape, care should be taken to ensure that they are interpreted as a logical extension of the city, without arbitrariness, in complete harmony with all the components that have determined the city's appearance since its early settlements through the centuries.

I knew what these hints meant. When I was first introduced to my task of redesigning Munich, Adolf Hitler had already explained to me how the city had developed from its natural features, dynastic connections, and the influence of the important trade route between the Inn, Isar, Lech, and Danube rivers. This took the form of a conversation, by no means didactic, but convincing, and the well-thought-out conclusions were decisive for the plans for the redesign of Munich. In the same way, he also justified the approach to residential areas based on the historical development of Munich.

Even before Carolingian times, he said, the royal and court estates, monasteries, and abbeys were located in the Bavarian cultural landscape surrounding what is now Munich. The royal estate of Oberföhring was donated to the Bishopric of Freising around the year 900. The old trade route, the salt road from Wasserburg am Inn to Augsburg or Landsberg am Lech, crossed the Isar in Oberföhring. A castle protected the crossing. It was a double bridge using a gravel island in the riverbed. A market developed, along with a mint and customs, which were highly important for the Bishop of Freising.

However, neither Oberföhring, now part of the Munich city area, nor the bishop were responsible for the town's founding.

Heinrich the Lion, who had been granted the Duchy of Bavaria, destroyed the Isar crossing, the bridge, and the castle of Oberföhring in the mid-12th century for dynastic reasons. He wanted the crossing and the stronghold of the important trade route to be within his sphere of influence.

Upstream, in his domain, the 258

natural conditions for crossing the Isar and building a bridge. A hollow, or rather a depression, interrupted the steep eastern bank of the Isar. The salt road could thus be led in a loop along the slope of the depression from the high bank to the Isar. Just here, as at Oberföhring, there was an island in the wild water of the river, which favored the construction of a bridge.

It is significant that Belotto-Canaletto painted his famous picture "Munich on the Isar" from this spot. Today, the gravel island with the two bridges has become the "Museum Island" and the Ludwigsbrücke bridge on Zweibrückenstraße.

These natural features were important for the location of the settlement "Zu den Mönchen" (To the Monks) from the very beginning: the river flowed from south to north and was used for rafting, and the depression on the steep bank led to the bridge, which was supported by the island in the white water. The second part of the bridge led to the flat gravel terraces.

rafts, and the depression on the steep bank led to the bridge, which was supported by the white water on the island. The second part of the bridge led to the flat gravel terraces of the west bank, which, divided into steps, form the foundations of today's city.

At that time, the old town center with the Isartor gate was far enough away from the white water of the river on the first gravel terrace. Stream branches leading westward from the Isar served as grave protection along the walls. around the Petersberg, where monks first settled. Later, the streams in the city were also used for commercial purposes. And since the time of Ludwig I, they have enlivened the English Garden and become an important part of the green spaces. The mighty glacial gravel terraces on which the city was built lie on impermeable Tertiary layers that slope from south to north like a river bed. Groundwater flows through the gravel cover. Filtered, the water then flows from the south into the city. Today, sewage flows northward, aided by the sloping terraces, through channels with a natural gradient to the sewage treatment plants—a terrain structure that is extremely favorable for the city.

On the high terrace east of the Isar, above the gravel bank from the Ice Age, there is a thick layer of clay and loess, clearly visible on the high bank where the Gasteig meets the river.

Wood, natural stone, limestone, tuff, and Nagelfluh were brought from the Alpine foothills on rafts on the Isar. Bricks made from the clay of the high terraces were used to build the city.

On the right bank of the Isar, these are the building materials of the city. The sand was extracted from the riverbed, not only for mortar; this sand also forms the basis for the plaster buildings, which, in combination with the ashlar, developed into a special feature of Munich. Together with the brickwork of the Frauenkirche, they add colorful accents to the cityscape.

So, Munich's location was determined by two factors: the dynastic actions of Henry the Lion and the natural conditions which enabled the introduction of the important trade route. This road

itself shaped the cityscape "from gate to gate, from east to west" and gave it growing importance as the city's lifeline and ultimately elevated it to the status of residence and capital of Bavaria.

Now, Adolf Hitler continued, it was necessary to continue this road in today's large urban area to the west and east, initially with an energetic opening to the west in order to enable the urgent reorganization of the rail and road transport structures. The disorderly, sometimes chaotic urban expansion of the 19th century led to suffocating ring developments, even though – as Adolf Hitler repeatedly pointed out – Ludwig I, with his road from the Residenz to the north, and, fifty years later, Prefect Haussmann, with his radial roads in Paris, had demonstrated the need to open up the growing urban organism to the outside world.

Thus, the Salzstraße, the city's lifeline, withered away in both the western and eastern directions as soon as it left the old, organic city center. After the Karlstor in the west, from Stachus, the street split into three. The middle one, which was also the weakest of the three, led to the main railway station, which at that time was positioned like a barrier, forcing the two outer branches, Arnulfstraße and Bayerstraße, to the side. Restricted and obstructed by petty building lines, these streets wound their way confusingly towards the open countryside. Every village exit is clear and consistent, said Adolf Hitler. He held had the city map in front of him and pointed to the station square: "This is where the break occurred, the 19th-century railroad replaced the medieval street. This street loses its status, its validity, and its formative power, all of which it had acquired over nearly a thousand years." He looked up: "I know, Giesler, before you were commissioned, this serious break between the Große Straße and the new main station had repeatedly occurred in the plans of the Reichsbahn and the city's building authority. Admittedly, it would all have taken place two and a half kilometers further west, but the dissonance would have remained. And, if built, it would have been sealed for good.

Year after year, roads are regaining their importance. Cars are here to stay, and further developments in the transport system are easy to predict. Soon, roads and railways will be on an equal footing, but not in opposition to each other! Rather, they must complement each other. It is important to solve the transport problems that are clearly emerging in cities in good time.

This is where our urban planning measures come in: the reorganization of rail and road transport structures, initially with the generous opening of the city to the west. This will allow the historic road, the origin and lifeline of the city, to continue and come to a meaningful conclusion in the urban space.

The primary focus may be on transport requirements or the urban planning recognition of the need for opening up to the outside world. However, what will distinguish our solution beyond its functional aspects is its appearance and architectural design; and in its connection with open spaces, our street will gain the status of an urban landmark. This is precisely what makes the plans and models for the western part of the redesign so convincing!

They show how, starting from the city center, on the old railway embankment and beyond the new main station, Pasing will gain spatial freedom with connections to two highways. This ensures the smooth flow of traffic, and the sensible arrangement of parking spaces in the road construction provides a direct link between private transport and the subway. This is something completely new; a road like this has never been built before.

I am convinced that it will be filled with life. It will not only serve traffic at various levels, but will also open up buildings that reflect the diversity of life: cultural buildings such as the opera house, the operetta theater, and halls for chamber music and lectures; buildings for physical culture, such as the thermal baths and the fashion house; buildings for entertainment, such as cinemas, restaurants, and cafés; in addition, there will be large hotel buildings; but also buildings for the working world, such as the press and business groups, exhibition spaces for industry and crafts, and finally shops of all kinds.

Then, after the new main station, the Große Straße opens up surprisingly anew; one gains an unexpected impression of the street space. In an open design, now interwoven with the green belt that already heralds the landscape, the buildings of the party organizations demonstrate the possibilities of a differentiated design of the individual buildings within a disciplined framework.

I note that the allocation of all planned buildings to the large west axis is justified by their purpose and nature. It is reasonable because it corresponds to the character of this large street. It would be incongruous to locate residential buildings here in the immediate vicinity of the west axis, which is primarily intended to serve traffic structures!

However, the designation of residential areas and the planning and design of residential buildings are the most important tasks to which we are now urgently committed. If you approach this task in your own way—as a National Socialist—then I am sure that the residential area as a whole will fit into the city and the community, just as every detail of a house or apartment serves a family. Give the architecture of residential buildings the expression of our time, but

It should also be based on the tradition that is unique to the buildings of this city! The atmosphere of Munich must be palpable, and with it the feeling of security, even in the buildings.

Plan the residential areas so that they serve life. Remember that excessive densification is detrimental and that any immoderate accumulation becomes a burden.

Guidelines and instructions for the southern part of the city

Adolf Hitler's main interest now lay in planning the residential area in the east of Munich, in the area of the new feeder road to the south, to the Salzburg-Vienna motorway with branches to Innsbruck and Berchtesgaden. This offered a breakthrough from the existing ring developments to a radial urban expansion along this radial feeder axis. Adolf Hitler did not envision the new residential area as a ribbon development, nor as a purpose-built isolation zone, as was often argued. He saw the residential area in the context of the city's redesign, in connection with the planned traffic flows of the underground and suburban railways, the jobs in the reoriented industrial areas, and he saw the residential units in connection with the green zones. The large motorway feeder road was to be both the backbone and the main access road for the southeastern residential area. The traffic policy significance of this road also had to be reflected in its appearance: the residential buildings, which were spaced at intervals and in rhythmic patterns on both sides

, served as a welcome to the city or, conversely, as a farewell from the city to the open countryside.

The directive was: unlike the tenements of the Wilhelminian era with their rear courtyards, and unlike the residential castles in Vienna, symbols of the Austro-Marxist class struggle, no monotonous accumulation of residential floors in high-rise buildings typical of American cities on the one hand, but also no haphazard urban sprawl on the outskirts with low-rise buildings

built by the wealthy on the other; these would burden the urban space with wasteful land consumption. But a jumble of arbitrary vertical structures in the midst of horizontally arranged residential areas was also to be avoided.

A built commitment to community should be expressed in the overall form yet in the many variations of the residential buildings and apartment layouts. All social classes, including the housing needs of large families, should be catered for: from two-room to six-room units. The majority would be four-room apartments to offer family-friendly living arrangements that are versatile for all sections of the population. The appropriate house form was found, starting in 1926

with green spaces in scattered, differentiated detached houses, through two-story row houses to multi-story row buildings oriented toward mass traffic flows.

Adolf Hitler wanted a structural representation of National Socialism: not the same for everyone, but something for everyone, yet without compromising on quality, out of respect for the value of the individual and the family. The planning thus also became a political task, more significant and responsible than the design of a party forum.

Adolf Hitler told me: We realize that not everything is possible at all times, so we want to tackle the difficult tasks

. This undoubtedly includes the planning and construction of a residential city on the scale that is planned and necessary. The architectural design of the residential city must bear the mark of our community. This is certainly a challenge for architects.

I would like to see individuality in the designs, but no extravagance. Everything must correspond to our time, our way of thinking and feeling, our nature. What is planned and built here should fit in with the atmosphere of Munich, respect the local way of life, and take the climatic conditions into account. Then the new residential area will have a lasting place in the urban fabric.

I also have to think about the influence that the overall design of the buildings, in addition to the apartments themselves, will have on everyone who lives there. You have to be able to feel the spirit of the buildings; in addition to high-quality craftsmanship, modern technology should also be used in a carefully considered way throughout the residential area and in the apartments.

Adolf Hitler did not want to do without the kitchen-living room in the variety of floor plan types, as he believed that it belonged to the habits of a simple household in various combinations and arrangements with the associated living area.

The four-room apartment should be the main goal in different versions, whether in two-story single-family row houses or in multi-story row houses. It should be a family-friendly living unit that allows for two children's bedrooms, but also lets these rooms be used as work or guest rooms:

Once again, Giesler, plan residential areas in such a way that they serve family life and promote community living.

Structure and buildings of the residential city

The major access road stretched for 10 kilometers from Gasteig, on the steep banks of the Isar, to the motorway ring road in its designated extended route.

extended route. The reorientation of this feeder road also resulted from the planning of the Ostbahnhof (east railway station). The strict, clear road layout, without distractions from brightly colored gas stations and intrusive advertising, corresponded to the desire for safe driving conditions, free from any disturbances. The generous road cross-sections were necessitated by the traffic volume expected in the future.

The existing motorway feeder road was to provide access to the new industrial area and connect it directly to the motorway ring road, whereby

The subsequent road systems enabled freight transport beyond the ring road into the open countryside to the east and south. This prevented excessive congestion and a traffic junction at the start of the motorway to Salzburg.

The new radial exit road to the south-southeast began at the Gau-Oktogon building, which surrounded the Bürgerbräukeller. A short break in the old residential development simultaneously opened up the site of the new Ostbahnhof station on all sides. This reorganization helped the Ostbahnhof station emerge from its previous isolation and gain urban status, becoming a dominant feature of the southern part of the city. This resulted in a convincing clarity of all rail and road traffic flows, and thus the eastern part of Munich also achieved full harmony between modern traffic engineering and architectural form: the transparent steel facades of the railway building enriched the street and square space.

Starting at the Platz am Ostbahnhof, the arterial road was given a wide cross-section lined with rows of trees. It was accompanied on both sides by secondary roads running the entire length to the motorway ring road. These parallel roads, initially two-lane and later three-lane, were necessary to provide access to the residential area and the construction sites and sports facilities of the Hitler Youth. The road system ensured all necessary connections from the traffic flows of cross and ring roads, access and arterial roads.

Before the motorway ring road, the wide city street profile changed.

The side lanes of the secondary roads led to and from the cloverleaf of the ring road. The city road connected to the motorway, and outside the city, after the intersection, a gate building now stretched out as a city landmark and destination, marking the end of the city and serving as a welcome point at the same time.

But this gate had more than just visual significance and marked the city limits: according to the plans, it served a variety of purposes, such as road maintenance, traffic police, an accident station, pilot, information, and telephone services, gas stations with vehicle inspection facilities, and finally as a location for rest and refreshment facilities.

From the outset, the large fallback axis bridged all transverse connections.

The radial arterial road to the motorway to Salzburg with the core of the planned residential town Süd.

265

It accommodated the tracks that fanned out and were lowered towards the east station, and then, further on, the cross streets and ring roads, which connected to the secondary roads and the main axis with entry and exit lanes. This opened up the area on both sides of the residential zone in terms of width and depth, creating the conditions for a road construction project with parking spaces similar to that of Große Straße in the west of the city.

When Adolf Hitler once again addressed the problems of traffic-friendly cities in an evening speech at the end of August 1944, he also ordered road construction for this axis.

the problems of traffic-friendly urban planning, he also ordered the construction of roads for this axis.

The road system with the main axis and the cross streets had the shape of a double Lorraine cross. This defined the structure of the southern city in two dimensions. From the ribbon development along a main traffic artery, a deeply structured residential area developed, extending into the green spaces on either side, as soon as the open spaces allowed.

The third dimension, which determined the cubic shape of the residential buildings, resulted from work on the plasticine model. The different variants of the models were also used to check the rhythmic intervals, building heights, densities, and building lines of the individual "Südstadt" quarters, which were given names such as Hochland, Alpenland, Chiemgau, Wallgau, Salzach, and Inn. Each neighborhood consisted of three to four thousand residential units.

The planning of the "Südstadt München" as a whole and in all its details

The design of the components was based on the peace standard, taking into account political, social, urban planning, design, and technical factors. These principles remained valid even in the early years of the war, when there was still hope for a quick peace. The planning was then completed in its achievable form. It was carried out in accordance with Adolf Hitler's instructions and housing program, taking into account all available knowledge and the experience and evaluations of many exemplary residential buildings, including the "Borstei" housing complex in Munich.

However, sporadic additions to the plans were made in the later years of the war in accordance with new instructions from Adolf Hitler, including his suggestion to include shopping arcades as a contemporary, modern development of the famous "arcades" of Merano and Bolzano. In addition, new insights gained from the experience of the bombing raids led to the construction of a test house in 1943/44. A small planning group dealt with the residential areas and residential buildings in detail. Two or three qualified employees from the department carried out the planning in constant contact with the other planning departments.

: transport, roads and development, industrial and work sites, green spaces, schools and kindergartens, sports and playground facilities. The aim was to clarify all the planning principles. This was followed by discussions with the Reichsheimstätten-Amt (Reich Housing Office), the Academy of Urban Planning, and the Grundrißforschung für den Wohnungsbau (Floor Plan Research for Housing Construction); the building standards were determined. Negotiations took place with the Ministry of Culture, the school authorities, the social welfare offices, the German Labor Front, the health authorities, the medical association, and hygienists. Housewives' associations were consulted, the party offices for public health and welfare were questioned, as were the Red Cross and the police regarding the arrangement of their districts. Negotiations were also held with the Reich Food Administration and farmers' leaders regarding the necessary exchange of agricultural land.

After all this extensive preparatory work, two freelance architects of high standing with extensive experience in housing construction were brought in. Consulting engineers were employed as freelance staff by the agency to clarify the choice of building materials, building designs, and preventive air-raid protection measures. They drew up the technical guidelines and detailed plans for the residential technology for kitchens and bathrooms, the service water supply, and the sewage disposal system with the aim of using largely prefabricated installation units. And then, which was of particular concern to engineer Gerke, the heating and energy supply for the southern part of the city from the planned Munich East cogeneration plant, one of the most important components of the residential city.

Civil engineers at the department dealt with the future organization of the large construction site in the southern part of the city, with the construction site setup, the construction schedule, and transportation issues. They considered combining large, medium, and small companies in the construction industry into working groups with tasks assigned according to the respective company's size. They considered combining large, medium-sized, and small companies in the construction industry into working groups with tasks assigned according to their respective capabilities, discussed mutual assistance with construction machinery, and the most appropriate way to stockpile building materials.

The future cooperation of Munich architects was planned. Groups of architects were to be formed, each with a trusted architect as spokesperson. Once the overall planning had been completed, these groups would be responsible for the planning and implementation of a section or "neighborhood" of the Süd residential city.

The planning group from the department itself and my private office consisted of about ten architects and engineers. They approached their task with a spontaneity as if they were competing for Olympic gold; it was a unique opportunity to build a city and plan residential areas for what would ultimately be a hundred thousand residents.

Many obstacles had to be overcome, and many questions and doubts that arose had to be decided with care. This was done

mostly after joint discussions that took place weekly, with one employee often acting as devil's advocate, representing the questions and doubts.

A fundamental question arose at the outset: Could this important traffic artery, the link between the city and the highway, be enclosed by high-rise buildings? This contradicted the urban planning principle that "residential buildings should be kept away from roads with through traffic." And it was precisely on this main traffic artery that densification was now to take place with four-, five-, and in some cases even six-story row buildings in order to give the street space an architectural framework. However, the intensive construction on both sides of the street was also based on economic considerations. The residential development of the Süd district was not only linked to the road system, but also to the underground and suburban railway lines planned under the Stadt-Radialstraße, which were supplemented by trams and buses in the cross streets and ring roads.

These convenient transport links to the city center and the surrounding area required a high population density to ensure the economic use of the mass transport facilities.

The multi-story residential rows divided the street space beyond its boundaries into intervals, creating individual neighborhoods and shaping the overall form. The working models confirmed that the proportions were in harmony. The relationships between the street space, the buildings, and the visible scales set by the flow of traffic also became clearly apparent. Space and the passage of time were in harmony, as on motorways. But the precise question remained: How could the residential units in the buildings that defined the street space be shielded from traffic noise? That was the only thing that mattered, because the other buildings to be constructed in the depths of the spatial structure were protected.

that defined the street space be shielded from traffic noise? That was the only issue, because the other buildings to be constructed in the depths of the spatial structure were protected by the multi-story buildings along these street fronts. In addition, the building heights were stepped down by one story each. This resulted in a roof-like slope in the zoning of the spatial structure to the east and west, extending to the two-story row houses or detached houses along the green zones at the end.

The course of the city's radial road, running almost north-south, was favorable for the orientation of the floor plans and the division of space in the multi-story buildings. The bedrooms of the residential units could be located away from noise, facing the wide, quiet, and planted courtyards, while the living rooms, kitchens, and ancillary rooms were arranged on the street side. Carefully planned structural measures ensured maximum noise insulation, while insulated "Cologne" vertical ventilation systems provided the apartments on all floors with a continuous supply of fresh air from the courtyards.

The street space with its wide cross-section of 80 meters also allowed for rows of trees. These visually separated the traffic area from the building fronts of the residential units, but these rows of trees were hardly effective in noise reduction and completely ineffective in winter.

The department's industrial planning division offered its ideal craftsmen's courtyards as a barrier against traffic noise. The layout of these courtyards meant that their fronts facing the street were immune to noise. They were planned for the central part

of the residential area, which contributed to the large, square-like expansion of the street space to a length of one and a half kilometers. Thus, a distinct city center began to form. The traffic road in this part was now shielded as if in a hollow formed by the craftsmen's courtyards and their connecting buildings.

These connecting buildings also served as traffic access points and provided space for escalators, pedestrian stairs, and elevators to the subway and S-Bahn station and to the car parking spaces in the basement. The courtyards became increasingly important, as they were also suitable in various forms for municipal and post offices, police stations, restaurants, cafés, and convenience stores. This meant that the residential buildings could be kept free of non-functional and often disruptive fixtures and inconsistencies.

The versatility of the courtyards was convincing, and Adolf Hitler suggested that single-story "gallery wings" be built along the remaining street fronts. He pointed out that these galleries were entirely feasible within the 80-meter overall profile between the main traffic axis and the side access roads without restricting the necessary clearance areas.

What were the advantages of this? The galleries now shielded the traffic noise from the traffic axis and at the same time provided a scale for the street development. At the same time, they allowed for an arcade along the versatile utility rooms. It could accommodate convenience stores, flower and magazine stands, small workshops such as tailors, dry cleaners, shoemakers, and the like; there was also space in these galleries for small exhibition rooms. Between them and the rows of houses, a quiet zone was created that was more reserved for pedestrians and could be designed in a variety of ways.

These gallery wings and the craftsmen's courtyards along the main traffic axis also made the engineers' work easier: the basement provided them with space for a continuous and controllable distribution system for the overall supply of all buildings.

A preliminary planning stage for the residential buildings in the southern part of the city was reached, resulting in countless floor plans, staircase arrangements, sections, and facades for versatile residential buildings with units of all sizes.

sizes. Each house and apartment type had been carefully worked out, calculated, and drawn. Before finalization, each design had to stand up to critical review by all participants, which was done under the motto: advantages and disadvantages. Now the foundations had been laid for later work by freelance Munich architects.

The engineers had worked with the same intensity to bring their assigned plans to a mostly convincing conclusion. For example, they had completely eliminated wood from the roof trusses. In order to comply with fire safety regulations, the usual wooden trusses were replaced by prefabricated reinforced concrete components, and the purlins and rafters were replaced by reinforced lightweight concrete slabs, which nevertheless allowed for any type of roof covering or roof cladding.

The development of floor coverings suitable for residential use in terms of ease of care, sound insulation, and heat insulation attracted a great deal of attention. Solid staircases of various types with natural or artificial stone steps and slabs, fireplaces, and ventilation units were to be prefabricated. Installation cells and shafts with closed, factory-fitted kitchen, bathroom, and toilet units, divided according to floor heights, were to facilitate installation. All standardization options were carefully reviewed and planned, for example for windows and doors.

Carefully, all standardization options were reviewed and planned, for example for windows and doors.

Aluminum was intended as the material for the windows, but the war-related expansion of production at aluminum smelters and processing plants made it an attractive choice. Apart from the design possibilities, it also allowed relatively lightweight double windows to be manufactured in a composite construction to provide noise protection for rooms facing the street.

Multi-story residential buildings in the southern part of the city. 272

This was part of the technological development. In the three-story buildings, space was provided for an elevator in the stairwell, and with the addition of a fourth floor, both the elevator and a garbage chute were included in the plans. The ventilated garbage room was located at street level. Central facilities with washing machines, drying rooms, mangles, and ironing machines were planned for the multi-story buildings to reduce the workload of housewives. Each facility was given a clearly laid-out recreation room for children. These central facilities were arranged in such a way that there was no disturbance to the residential units.

The air raid protection measures planned by the engineers were within the usual scope: air raid shelters in the basement, reinforced reinforced concrete walls and ceilings beyond the debris protection requirements. Given the desired low-density development of two- and three-story residential buildings, this was the right approach based on all the information available at the time. The appropriate form of air raid protection became problematic with the densification of the residential units in the multi-story row buildings. This was because the route to the shelter via the stairwell through five or six floors was almost unreasonable; even an elevator could not meet this requirement. The concentration of people in the basement was also unsatisfactory. And the space requirements inevitably called for an additional basement level, a deep basement.

But there remained a feeling of unease. It was only the experience of the intensified bombing raids in the following years that led to a unique solution: the creation of shelters in multi-story row houses.

Protective bunkers were planned at the traffic junctions and incorporated into the architectural design as a modern form of former castle and city defense and protection towers.

The uniform supply of heat, hot water, and energy to the southern part of the city from the Ost heating plant resulted in a high degree of economic efficiency, which in turn reduced household expenses and made work easier for housewives. Even more significant, however, was the elimination of countless individual heating systems and fireplaces in the southern part of the city, which produced smoke, exhaust fumes, and soot.

The cooperation of the department's "green space planning" team also proved its worth. The green space zones or wedges were connected to the residential buildings by gardens and plantings, green sports areas, sunbathing and playing fields. Trees, lawns, and flowers thrived in the spacious courtyards. Lattice gates opened the garden courtyards to the streets, allowing for garden maintenance and ventilation.

Pavilions were planned for the courtyards as meeting places for the elderly to socialize or relax, with sandboxes, paddling pools, and playgrounds for the little ones set apart from them. The access road, which

divided the courtyard in the middle from gate to gate, the pavilions had storage rooms for garden tools, garden furniture, and bicycles.

I believe everything has been thought of here, said Adolf Hitler, and after a while: But you can't build a city with just apartments...!

This marked the beginning of critical deliberations about the form of the urban center of the southern city. The discussions were based on the initial plans drawn up by my staff. As architects of the Südstadt planning association, they had convincingly integrated the residential center into the overall structure. Now it was a matter of organizing the core area itself, the building structure, the grouping of the higher-level buildings of the community, the administration, and the public facilities. It was also a matter of scale, because this core structure had to stand out from the multitude of residential buildings and yet blend in with the residential neighborhoods.

This was preceded by numerous investigations and considerations as to what was necessary for the southern part of the city and what therefore had to be designed in the city center. I gave my colleagues complete freedom in the design of this core area. They were to be commissioned as independent architects for the subsequent realization of these buildings. My contribution was limited to a few suggestions. As I was overloaded with work, it made sense to let the young designers work as independently as possible. This resulted in various designs, which were also presented in working models.

Adolf Hitler was also given the overview models along with the plan drawings. for the entire residential district of Süd. The structure of the city center was also clearly defined in the plan: from the green belt in the east to the green space in the west, this building complex connected at right angles with the central street and square.

The "city center" began at the eastern green belt with buildings for young people, their education and training in schools, with the high school at its center. Sports halls and green spaces lead to the stadium. Gardens and green spaces run alongside it through the residential quarters.

The stadium was followed by the hall, which was designed to serve all purposes. It was surrounded on two sides by commercial areas that formed small courtyards or enclosed quiet squares suitable for administrative offices and institutes, with a series of rooms for special professions such as doctors, lawyers, publishers, and libraries. This was followed by the open square between the hall and the street-square space of the axis.

Next to the craftsmen's courtyards, which were intended to serve the supply market, hotels, restaurants, cafes, and commercial buildings were planned as square walls. Terraces with fountains were planned in front of them. All of this was laid out in a westward direction and now connected with the large street-square space of the axis running in a north-south direction.

north-south direction of the axis. The craftsmen's and market courtyards were flanked by transparent pavilion buildings with protective roofs for the entrances to the underground and suburban railways. They also provided access to the underground parking areas.

The thermal baths were planned for the western part of the city center—no, not just a bathing facility, it was much more than that. Admittedly, the planned complex, with its deliberate simplicity and size, could not compare to the Roman baths of Trajan, Caracalla, or Diocletian. However, the planned facility in the city center deserved special mention because of the hot water that was available all year round from the Ost heating plant, free of charge, thanks to the residual energy. The thermal baths, with a large indoor swimming pool and a large outdoor pool, were connected to rooms for gymnastics and personal hygiene. This was followed by a tree-lined green space, then a group of medical baths led to a partial clinic. The planned Südstadt hospital, facing the large western green space, completed the complex. In the model, the order of the building structure was still flexible, as far as the scale allowed, and thus open to criticism or suggestions.

Adolf Hitler's comments, thoughts, and suggestions were interesting. He recognized the problems of the city from a particular era and its contemporary form: It is a special task to give structure and expression to a consolidated residential area. However, when the number of residential buildings far exceeds what has been customary up to now and reaches the scale of a residential city, it is necessary to meet this standard and rank. For a city cannot arise from the mere accumulation of residential buildings! He repeated this and gave the following reason:

A concentration of purely residential units can become boring and even lead to dreary monotony. Only through the architectural representation of all social and cultural requirements and institutions that would be taken for granted in the life of a large community would give the Südstadt residential area its structure, form, status, and sense of unity. It should be noted that, despite its independence, this unity would still be perceived as part of the city of Munich as a whole, so that its residents would feel that they belonged to the city center that had grown over centuries.

These city centers or cores that touched us—as in Augsburg or Salzburg—had mostly been formed over long periods of time, spanning generations. This was also the case in Munich. Their historical styles also reflect the political events and fate of their times. In contrast, the center of the residential city of Süd, with no historical reference in its structure and form, would have to exist as a feature of our time and gain recognition. This is where the difficulty lies: shaping a city center as an expression

of a generation! A "city crown" could not be created, as this would require a vertical trend, for which there was no reason here. And yet the southern city center must find an urban form that ultimately corresponds to the character of the city and the physiognomy of the residential area.

Then Adolf Hitler said something very peculiar: Imagine

if contemporaries of the bridge over the Isar "to the monks" were led through the center of the old town, from gate to gate. It would be a dreamlike unreality, a utopia for them. And yet it is reality, even if separated and removed from them by centuries.

I know you understand what I mean: poets, philosophers, artists, musicians, painters, and architects often carry dreamlike unreality and ideas within them that manifest themselves when the environment allows it.

Creative power is not limited to philosophers and artists. The ability to break new ground beyond their own generation is characteristic of many intellectual people, including scientists, engineers, technicians, and, in particular, doctors with a thirst for research! Something of this "not yet existing" should resonate in designs, otherwise everything would remain the same! However, wishes and visions should not lead to exaggeration.

The patron

I attended a lecture by Adolf Hitler: I am concerned about the possible organization of the developers and the financing for

the southern part of the city. I must admit that I understand very little about this. This question weighs heavily on me. Should the organizational form be that of a special-purpose association, a community of developers led by someone who has the trust of all those involved?

In Weimar, this proved successful under the strict leadership of Gauleiter Sauckel.

But where do you start here with the property developers? Are they also building cooperatives? They don't contribute anything and only increase the bureaucracy.

With the banks? I think you would have to start with the city, but they scream when it comes to money, as I experienced when the Ludwigsbrücke bridge was completed!

It would take a strong personality to bring together all the developers, the city, the party, and the state, set up the financing, and take charge in an authoritative manner.

Giesler, "I will take care of your concerns," said Adolf Hitler, and a few days later

I already had my first meeting with the Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP, Xaver Schwarz, now in his capacity as patron of the major construction project

"Südstadt München" (Munich's southern district).

I was surprised by the Reich Treasurer's initiative and his keen interest in the planning of the residential city. His nature—which was also reflected in his office—was more characterized by austere reserve. I rightly suspected a suggestive hint from Adolf Hitler, whom even such a personality, who watched over the party's "big money," could not resist.

That was indeed the case. Adolf Hitler told me shortly afterwards that it had been important to him to win the Reich Treasurer for the project, as he believed that

financial support and careful administration were in the best hands. But you won't get off scot-free! He will ask you to advise him

and planning as an architect for his hometown of Günzburg. You will work well with him; you will gain a fatherly friend in him.

This "You will work well with him" was typical of Adolf Hitler; it was both a request and an expectation. After discussing the matter with him in my studio, I learned something more about the conversation that had led to the Reich Treasurer agreeing to become patron.

Afterwards, "they" had talked about patronage, about the Florentine Medici Lorenzo il Magnifico, the patron of artists and humanists, about the breakthrough to the Renaissance. Then the conversation turned to patronage in the social sphere, and Adolf Hitler mentioned Jakob Fugger of Augsburg, who had the social housing district in Augsburg built, the "Fuggerei," a foundation that still exists and is valid today, as one of the first representatives of this kind. Jakob Fugger, "the Rich," had thus created a monument to himself that would endure for centuries, despite the transience of money. That was around 1520, a hundred years before Elias Holl built the Augsburg town hall, as Adolf Hitler told the Reich Treasurer: And both belong to Augsburg, this residential building and the town hall and, of course, the cathedral, the churches, the magnificent street with the fountains, the royal merchants, and the great tradition.

The Reich Treasurer was very impressed, Adolf Hitler told me, he did not need to ask him to accept the dignity and burden of patronage, he felt obliged to do so and said: "We cannot just build party buildings in Munich as part of the redevelopment, ? the apartments are also part of it.

This concern was now off my mind. The patron was a strong personality with authority; he was—and this applied to all institutions and banks, all developers, such as the city and state, the party, and the German Labor Front—the guarantor for the security and implementation of the planned "Südstadt München" (Munich's southern district). In November 1940, Reich Treasurer Adolf Hitler assured that

the financing of the southern part of the city had been clarified*. He is said to have concluded by saying: What is missing is peace.

At the time, we had no idea how far away peace was. In the winter of 1941/1942, we architects and engineers from the department were deployed in the Baltic States and then in the area of the Army Group Russia-North. We were involved in the construction and repair of railways, roads, and bridges and everything else that served to secure supplies for the front.

But our thoughts were with the southern part of the city, whether we were in Riga, Reval, Narva, or Pleskau.

In a small construction company near Reval, I saw a new building material: porous concrete. It was a Swedish development; cement slurry mixed with very fine sand was foamed up with aluminum powder, which acted like yeast, and then, before it set, was cut with wire into large blocks or slabs. Steam-cured, the material was porous, light as wood thanks to countless tiny air bubbles, with a solid structure and exceptional thermal insulation. The mass could be reinforced with steel mesh, with slab lengths ranging from floor to floor and up to over 4 meters.

This was an important building material for the southern part of the city. Formed into slabs, replace the purlins and rafters of roof trusses while providing thermal insulation. In addition, it had a wide range of uses in brick formats and as wall panels.

I commissioned an experienced construction contractor to negotiate the license in Sweden. Near Munich, I arranged the first production facility for this aerated concrete, supplied the plant with workers, with quotas for cement, iron, and steel, procured aluminum powder, and then arranged for material testing and the trial construction of residential units. From small beginnings, a significant plant emerged after the war, but not as I had imagined it.

At the time, I saw aerated concrete production as being directly linked to combined heat and power plants. The ash and fine-grained slag produced there were to be processed as raw materials directly at the plant. Steam curing was already in place, and the performance cycle from energy and heat generation to the use of residues would have been closed.

Protection and basements in the apartments

I was still preoccupied with the problematic air raid protection measures for the residential units in the multi-story row houses of the planned Südstadt. From month to month, the bombing raids against civilians, women, and children had intensified.

civilians, women, and children had intensified. In all large cities, it had been found that the long distances from the upper floors via the stairwells to the air-raid shelters, accompanied by the wailing of sirens, caused physical and psychological stress, especially for large families, disabled people, and the elderly. During prolonged periods of threat

, air raid protection in basement rooms was inadequate for all residents of these buildings, and the long distances to them were unreasonable. This realization had to be taken into account in the planning of new buildings.

When planning for the southern part of the city began in 1939, the planned air-raid shelters complied with the regulations in force at the time; the rule was for rubble-proof shelters in basements or general air-raid bunkers. This may still be considered sufficient in the early years of the war. But later, the nightly attacks by Allied bomber squadrons intensified.

until the catastrophe in Cologne and the terror in Hamburg. This development was already apparent at the beginning of 1942, but even then the bestial degeneration, the horrific inferno of Dresden, was unforeseeable.

During the first years of the war, I had ample opportunity to see bombed cities and aerial photographs of them. I noticed that chimneys of all kinds and stairwell walls had often withstood the blast, protruding from the rubble. In other words, a self-contained circle, square, or rectangle in the masonry had withstood the explosive pressure and suction.

There were photographs that showed that the bomb had hit the wall and slid off to detonate at the side without causing the masonry to collapse; of course, this depended on the thickness of the wall and the explosive power of the bomb.

This gave me the idea of installing small air-raid towers through the floors of the row houses. I was also reminded of the medieval defense and protection towers in Bologna, Florence, and San Gimignano.

I sketched the tower in the middle of two residential units, with the expansion joint between the two fire walls of the apartment block able to shift around the inserted protective tower. This way, a reinforced concrete tower without static Load on residential buildings: two shelters for the two adjacent residential units on each floor. The two rooms could be separated by the walls of the ventilation units across all floors.

Inside the tower, a small spiral staircase leading from the attic to the basement provided a means of communication between those seeking shelter.

The shelter could be accessed from the hallway or from an adjoining room of the residential unit via an angled air-raid shelter. It also provided secure storage for valuables, documents, and equipment.

and equipment. There was enough space for children's beds stacked on top of each other and for benches. The particular advantage of the tower was that it offered immediate protection within the apartment and that every floor, from the attic to the basement, could be monitored for firebombs and incendiary devices. Initially, the tower provided a subdivided shelter for two apartments on each floor. However, in the multi-story row houses, two residential units were assigned to each stairwell. In emergencies, it had to be possible to offer protection to the stairwell neighbors in the same tower. It was reasonable to grant the floor neighbors access to the shelter via the apartment hallway.

The plan now envisaged one large five- or six-room residential unit directly adjacent to the shelter, with a smaller three- or four-room unit in the same building accessible via the neighbor's hallway. This meant that a tower spanning five residential floors could provide shelter for twenty residential units. Every second stairwell was skipped. This was now also acceptable in terms of construction costs. The individual construction, wall thickness and reinforcement, the design of the airlocks and the ventilation were discussed and determined with air raid protection experts, specialists and engineers. It was clear that absolute protection against the constantly evolving and increasing explosive power of the bombs was not possible. The wall thicknesses of one meter initially required were reduced to 60 centimeters. In the planning of the floor plan systems for the row buildings, the towers were positioned about 50 centimeters in front of the building lines, giving them a distinctive appearance as sculptural risalits on the facades. They interrupted the horizontal line of the residential rows and created rhythmic intervals. A model clearly showed the tension and solidity of the architectural fronts. The important street axis would be given its appropriate setting.

At the Führer's headquarters in Winniza, I gave Adolf Hitler a report on the protective towers I had designed. Using floor plans, sectional sketches, and architectural drawings, I explained the advantages of the vertical arrangement of the protective spaces. I also emphasized the practical benefits: in peacetime, the protective shelters could be used as spacious storerooms by the adjacent apartments, even better than the basement rooms. As protective shelters, they were equipped with continuous ventilation, and the thick walls, to which the partition walls of the house blocks were added, would keep the protective and storage rooms cool. The actual basement rooms could be divided up more generously, leaving space for hobby and work rooms.

Adolf Hitler agreed: Protection and cellars in the home, that is once and for all...

lig. Have a test house built. That's what happened, and the test house with the protective tower proved its worth during the bombing raids.

Air-raid shelter and "cellar" in an apartment in a multi-story building. 281

The traffic-friendly city

Führer headquarters Wolf's Lair – end of August 1944*

After the collapse of Army Group Center in Russia in June/July 1944, which endangered the entire Eastern Front with the loss of nearly 25 divisions, and after the assassination attempt and its as yet unforeseeable consequences, a severe setback in the West had now come. Adolf Hitler told me that these were the worst days of my life that I had to endure.

During this time, between military meetings in the evenings and at night, interrupted by messages being handed in, he dealt with urban planning problems. I realized that all these conversations he had with me were not just for his own relaxation.

It seemed to me rather that the conversations offered him a kind of mental relaxation, strange as that may sound. It was not a way of "switching off" from the extraordinary strain he had to bear day and night, day in and day out, but rather a way of shifting his thinking to other levels. He formed insights and gave me instructions for far-sighted future planning.

The Allies were approaching Paris at that time. It was only natural that I asked at the beginning of our conversation: What will happen to Paris?

He had appointed a commander for Paris, whose task was to bring order to this cursed rear area, form units that were still capable of fighting against snipers and gangs, suppress uprisings, and dissolve all services that were useless in this situation, transferring the soldiers thus freed to the combat units at the front.

Is Paris to be defended?

Such a city could only be defended with great military effort.

Therefore, fighting in Paris should only take place if necessary for the safety of the troops. This included keeping the transport routes open. He was not thinking of destruction, but that depended on the behavior of the regular enemy forces as well as the partisans, the gangs of the so-called Resistance, insofar as they became a threat to our troops through uprisings.

Otherwise, Paris was to be spared. 282

Neither Adolf Hitler nor anyone else in the Führer's headquarters that Paris must burn! Adolf Hitler closed the subject: No briefing, Giesler, I wish to discuss and clarify urban planning issues with you. We sat down.

Giesler, at the beginning of your planning of the major east-west axis I ordered, which runs from the old to the new main station, you convincingly demonstrated that you consider this road space to be a road construction project.

That means you want to keep this important road completely free of intersections. You want to build underpasses for the cross streets and inner-city ring roads, while still allowing cross traffic to merge into the respective direction of travel on the main axis. So you are connecting these two different road levels with on- and off-ramps.

"But that was one of your requirements back then," I said, "no intersections on Große Straße!"

But what you have then done with this necessary requirement is new. You are using the space between the cross streets and the ring roads under the main axis as continuous parking areas, and these parking areas can be accessed from both the main axis and the cross streets and ring roads. This creates a two-level road structure, with the subway line as the third traffic level below. This not only ensures unimpeded traffic flow, but also solves the parking problem at the same time. I was very impressed by this at the time, and I would like to discuss it with you in more detail.

It was your ideas that led to the road construction, I objected, because when I was planning the Augsburg Forum, you said that a large open space in the city center could only be justified if the area was used on two or three levels: one as an urban space that could be freely designed, as a square; but underneath, this area would have to be doubled for the necessary parking and storage spaces, for rooms of all kinds, and today an additional floor would also be desirable as an air-raid shelter. Your considerations for Augsburg Square then had to be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the large street space of the new east-west axis in Munich.

It was only logical that the subway route would be built on the third level of this road construction project. Otherwise, due to the cross streets and ring roads, the longitudinal profile would have been wavy, which would have made it very difficult to arrange the stops, which had to be located as close as possible to these cross streets and ring roads.

The planned two-story road construction project also provides sufficient space space for all the drainage and sewerage pipes, for supplying the buildings with heat and hot water, for the necessary pumps and heat exchangers, and for the electricity and telephone cables and transformer stations.

The cable harnesses, pipelines, and ducts are thus housed in a maintenance-friendly manner so that it is not necessary to repeatedly tear up the roads, as has been the case up to now.

Another advantage is that the buildings on the east-west axis of the cross and ring roads, i.e. in the basement, under the almost 20-meter-wide sidewalks with the road structure. Along the building fronts of the axis, these connecting roads are arranged in two lanes and can be used by all types of vehicles, including furniture transporters.

This will enable the department stores, commercial and office buildings, hotels and restaurants, shops and whatever else there may be to be supplied without disrupting the actual road space and sidewalks. In addition, on each side of the supply road, i.e., in the basement, there is an additional parking lane about 10 meters deep between the tree-concrete boxes for parking vehicles belonging to the buildings.

An adjutant interrupted us, announcing that the evening military briefing was about to begin. Adolf Hitler said to me:

"This briefing will take me several hours today. In the meantime, please draw the street profile as a cross-section of the road construction between the building fronts, including the supply roads and access ramps as well as the third level of the subway line, so that I can memorize every detail."

I had enough time for this drawing. In addition to the requested cross-section, I sketched a section of the ground plan of the Große Straße, corresponding to Adolf Hitler's original sketches. In addition, I drew a partial longitudinal section showing a cross-road or ring road, with access ramps and junctions with the service roads along the groups of buildings, as well as the development of the large public parking areas under the actual road space.

After midnight, Adolf Hitler returned from the situation meeting. I had drawn the sketches he wanted on a scale of 1:200. In addition

I added the overview plan of Munich with all the new design entries. This showed the major road axes, the railway facilities with the new main station, and the motorway ring road. He first studied the sketches for the road construction in detail.

Then he pointed to the overview plan:

"The new main station will be moved 2,500 meters to the west. How many parking spaces will there be in this area of your road construction project?"

In this section, the road construction between the building fronts...

According to your specifications, they will have a width of 120 meters, apart from the extensions provided by the open spaces at the party monument, the new opera house, and the new main railway station. This means that the basement of the actual street area will provide parking space for around 6,000 cars, taking into account the space required for the cross streets and ring roads and generously dimensioned access widths.

there is parking space for around 6,000 cars, taking into account the space required for the cross streets and ring roads and generously dimensioning the access widths and parking radii in the parking area.

In addition to these 6,000 parking spaces under the road space, there are also parking lanes on the two-lane service roads under the sidewalks along the two building fronts. They are arranged in such a way that the basement fronts remain free for loading and unloading. This provides

there are around 1,000 additional parking spaces, which are to be reserved for staff and the respective businesses.

Similarly, the basement of Opernplatz will be reserved for visitors to the opera, guests of the opera hotel, and the restaurants and cafés planned for this square. There is also the option of adding another parking level below ground, as Opernplatz, similar to Augsburger Platz, is higher than the crest of the east-west axis.

Have you considered ventilation for the parking areas?

Yes, my engineers advised me on that: a duct system will be installed in the basement floor, with fans leading to afterburning chambers with filter systems and connections to chimney flues in the building complexes. I also want to use the flak towers for ventilation; that is possible, and it will give them a permanent, useful purpose.

Adolf Hitler rejected this: "The central anti-aircraft towers I ordered at the time were intended to protect the new main railway station and also serve as shelters. But they have now lost their purpose due to the indiscriminate carpet bombing we have experienced, although the flak and protective tower in Berlin Zoo has proven its worth. We will move the flak towers, if at all, to the outskirts of the city, but then as striking city gates at the intersections of the motorway and the motorway ring road. But that is still

not a decision; I am concerned with other matters at present.

You mentioned the possibility of heating the road surface that can be switched on in case of snowfall or black ice. There was still some uncertainty about the system. Have your engineers made any progress with this plan?

We have thought through and calculated several options, and two systems have emerged that still need to be weighed up against each other. I am leaning towards the proposal of a heated chamber under the concrete slab of the roadway.

So a "double-shell ceiling"?

Yes. A removable, insulated lightweight ceiling will be suspended at the level of the longitudinal beams. Between it and the concrete slab of the roadway, a warm air space will be created which, when it snows, will allow heat from the heating system to flow into the roadway.

werk West. This keeps the road free of snow and prevents black ice from forming. This is essential for the major east-west axis, as it would be impossible to clear the large amounts of snow that often accumulate overnight in Munich by mechanical or manual means, and it would be equally impossible to grit the roads in icy conditions. Since my student days in Munich, I have often seen "snowmen" shoveling snow off the streets for days on end and dumping it into the sewer shafts just to keep the main roads reasonably clear.

"You're right, that's not possible for streets of this new size." In the meantime, tea had been brought into the adjoining room.

"Refreshments, Giesler! Take the overview plan and the accompanying scale with you, and we'll continue our discussion. I want to present my thoughts on the solution we should aim for to solve the traffic problems we are facing."

If we assume that the old town center, with its streets and squares, met the traffic and supply needs of the time, then we have a basis for our considerations.

Back when Ludwig I began his construction projects, there were 70,000 to 80,000 city residents—no more! Today, the city and its population have grown tenfold to 800,000. On top of that, there are cars; regardless of

Whether it is moving or parked, it takes up space on the road. And if this car traffic increases fivefold or even tenfold after the war, the external traffic pressure on the city center will become unbearable and lead to disaster. But this will not only affect the city center; it will affect the entire urban organism.

The more a city becomes denser towards its center, the narrower the streets tend to become, whose building lines have existed for decades, and in the center for centuries. At that time, buildings were constructed according to the scale of people and their needs, and not according to the scale required by today's individual means of transport, the car.

Wherever cars can be avoided in the city center—with exceptions allowed—mass transportation offers a viable alternative, such as the subway and streetcars running below street level with a completely new car design. This relieves traffic in the narrower urban areas, and the streets are once again on a human scale, as they have been for hundreds of years.

How can we counter the traffic pressure that increasing motorization will inevitably bring with it? Well, let me start again from the beginning: I said "traffic pressure from outside," and that's where I'll start.

Currently, there are three motorways leading to Munich. Once the redesign is complete, there will be six motorway access roads or roads with a motorway profile.

cross-section. This is because the motorway from the southwest is necessary to absorb the traffic flow from Lindau and the Alpenstraße and, according to your plans, will join the motorway west at Pasing to form the extended east-west axis. In addition, the Olympiastraße from Garmisch will be expanded and later an eastern motorway will be built, approximately from the direction of Mühldorf. All these car-friendly roads will have side access roads as entry and exit lanes for local and local traffic.

But for now, I'll stick with the three existing highways from the west, north, and southeast. Once they break through the highway ring, they'll become urban expressways, but they'll also get side lanes for side streets and small city traffic. In line with these three motorway expressways, however, the underground railway lines will also run parallel to them – and this is important! This means that mass transport, i.e. the railways and underground, will run beneath the cars and other private vehicles. If a parking level is now planned between these two traffic levels, as you have proposed for the new east-west axis, then we not only gain parking space, but we also have a seamless transition from private car traffic to city-friendly mass transit via the subway and further connections to the underground tram. Cars coming from outside the city, from the highways, the highway ring road, but also from the cross-city and inner-city ring roads, can park, and thanks to the layout of the subway stations, the longest distance from the parked car to the station is 200 to 250 meters. I think that's perfectly reasonable. So we're creating another level for 'stationary traffic', a buffer and transition between individual and mass transport.

But that means, I said, extending the road network to all motorways and expressways.

Yes. Add up the possible extension lengths and work out the approximate number of parking spaces!

I went back to my desk, measured the lengths of the possible road construction projects on the overview plan, and made a rough estimate of the parking space required. Bormann appeared, brought reports, and talked quietly with Adolf Hitler. Schaub came with reports of enemy aircraft and bomb attacks. Then I was able to add my figures:

A total of 24 kilometers, if you extend the section of Olympiastraße from Maxhof-Forstenried via Schloß Fürstenried to Sendling. All the underground space gained would result in around 60,000 parking spaces—at least!

Adolf Hitler's response: "This corresponds to the future development of motorization as I see it, not taking into account the additional urban expressways that are still planned."

The motorway ring road relieves the city of all through traffic and enables the fastest connection between the motorways. For the flow of traffic from all sides into the city, the

"road structures" at least 24 kilometers long provide immediate access from parked cars to the subway, from individual traffic

to mass transport. This will initially provide parking for 60,000 cars, which will not block the streets. The building complexes along the major road axis will not have any parking problems.

There is no more nuisance, no more alienation of streets and squares that were not built to accommodate cars. The city center remains manageable, noise and exhaust fumes are reduced, and the accident rate also falls.

Because of exhaust fumes and noise pollution, an elevated road for car traffic in the city is just as nonsensical as raising the railways. All this is at the expense of humane conditions and the urban character of the city. First and foremost, streets and squares in the city center must belong to pedestrians!

I noticed that we have plans to turn some streets into pedestrian zones, such as Neuhauser Strasse, Kaufinger Strasse, Residenzstrasse, and Marienplatz, except of course for delivery vehicles at certain times of the day. Do you want these pedestrian zones for the entire old city center?

Yes and no. I want to relieve the city center as much as possible. Of course, the old town cannot do without taxis; they can drive into the old town center. This also applies to fire trucks, police cars, doctors, ambulances, and vehicles for the physically disabled, as well as

the Reichspost and municipal service vehicles. In short, exceptions must be allowed. However, all vehicles will be given a special license plate, and drivers must have the appropriate permits. Deliveries and the supply of goods must also be made possible within a limited time frame.

Some spaces will also have to be freed up, such as Max-Josef-Platz in front of the National Theater and Viktualienmarkt; both squares should also be provided with at least one underground level. The traffic restrictions in the city center are tolerable and will not diminish the value of the old town buildings—on the contrary! Of course, the old town center must be regenerated where necessary. Above all, the backyards must be opened up, but everything must be done with due care so that the old town center retains its character. I also want the mass transportation system planned so far to be designed in such a way that the old town center retains its character.

care to ensure that the old city center retains its character. I also don't want to leave it at the mass transportation system planned so far, the subway intersection and the subway ring. The north-south subway line touches the old town to the west, while the east-west line follows the course of the old salt road, to which Munich owes its existence.

You once told me about the small underground railway in Budapest, which runs at right angles from the Danube for several kilometers into the center of the new district. It consists of several coupled cars with electric drives in the front and rear cars. At the terminal stations, the driver changes seats and drives back along the same route. Thanks to its unobstructed route, it is faster than a two-track tram, does not block the road, is silent, and is not affected by the weather. Of course, this is a primitive form of underground tram, but even from this we can learn something!

Underground railways should be designed and built with a profile that is not too large, usually even single-track, as a ring or loop. The route should be based on the districts to be served, naturally taking into account the available road space that can be expanded.

It seems important to me that these underground trams should, as far as possible, intersect both the north-south and east-west lines of the subway, especially in the city center. This will make them not only access lines, but also feeder and connecting lines. We must always remember that the lines of the main subway network are not only used for actual urban transport, but also connect Munich—outside the city as suburban railways—with the suburbs, lakes, and mountains.

Adolf Hitler then drew Munich's transport system on a pad of paper: first the oval of the motorway ring, then the double route of the S-Bahn and subway intersection, and at the same time the city expressways as a continuation of the highways in the city area. He marked the two new stations, the main station and the "Ost" station. A slightly slanted wavy line indicated the course of the Isar River. He then drew a circle that touched both stations, the wide inner-city subway ring. He then hatched the old town center and sketched various systems of underground tram lines in the form of diagonal diamonds and open double loops, saying:

The simple "Budapest straight line" is also possible. What I am sketching here is only a symbolic representation. In the planning stage, the urban organism has primacy. The route takes into account the course of the road so that construction is carried out in an open manner as far as possible and only in exceptional cases, such as underpasses, in a tunnel system.

Have you thought about the technical side of constructing these road structures? Given the expansion of this system, that's important, isn't it? In a nutshell, please! My engineers and I have thought about the construction process. The basis was soil research, which determined through drilling that we would mainly encounter gravel banks. With the planned open construction method — tunnel driving in the city center, of course — the gravel excavated is washed,

separated by screening equipment, crushed by crushers where necessary, then processed in concrete plants and transported and pumped to the construction sites.

The roadside verges and foundations are laid in advance. This is followed by two different systems of formwork elements, each about 30 meters long, made of steel. These elements run horizontally on rails as slipform formwork. They are aligned vertically using hydraulics. After the concrete has set, the formwork element is lowered slightly and moved forward along the rails by one length, aligned, and the next section is concreted.

The first system is for the subway profile, the second for the parking space. and the road surface. The systems run in sequence. The supports and beams are prefabricated. The remaining excavated gravel is used in the buildings for the foundations, basements, and ceilings.

Good! Your engineers should check to what extent the roadworks for the construction of the underground railways can also be used for general supply, for energy and heat from the planned combined heat and power plants. Solving traffic problems for the future is not only urgent for Munich! We can already foresee that individual transportation, the car, will take up road space to an extent that is not yet imaginable. This development is already becoming apparent.

Despite possible diversion via the motorway ring road, road space will be overused, and a second level for mass rail transport will have to be built. This will reduce car traffic to a reasonable level, otherwise the old town will suffocate from cars and their exhaust fumes! So let's build a city that is fit for traffic and thereby lay the foundation for a healthy urban organism and, at the same time, the prerequisite for a redesign that is in keeping with the atmosphere of Munich! We will carefully respect everything that belongs to the character of this city and preserve its appearance, which has been shaped over centuries by citizens and kings.

The party monument in Munich

Führer headquarters Wolf's Lair? Late autumn 1944

The entrance gate to the Cour d'honneur of Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna is flanked by two pylons. They stand on a base that is in proportion to their imposing height. The slender pylons end like obelisks and are crowned by bronze eagles with outstretched wings, their talons clenching balls with symbolic meaning. The sculptural niches in the base of the pylons formerly served as weather protection for the imperial guards. Like delicate filigree, they contrast sharply with the massive base.

the connecting, ornamental, lively latticework of the gates. In the spring of 1938, I traveled to Vienna to get to know the buildings that had been built in an organically well-ordered manner around the old core of the former imperial city.

. I wanted to see this Vienna that had given the young Hitler insights and standards in urban planning, and inspired him with new ideas. These impressions from his experiences in Vienna, and certainly also in Munich, led him to completely new, modern ideas about urban design. This was evident in his sketches and drawings, which were created during his imprisonment in the Landsberg fortress and later. What interested me in Vienna was not so much the "Gothic old town" as the spacious "Ring," which had been laid out on the open space of the demolished glacis, ramparts, and bastions. The magnificent buildings along this ring road were eclectic, in keeping with the 19th century, but designed by good architects, they were in keeping with the dignity of this imperial city. However, it was above all the masterful buildings of the great Baroque architects Fischer von Erlach and Hildebrandt that were impressive and certainly had a great influence on the young Hitler, especially the magnificent, harmonious Belvedere of Prince Eugene of Savoy, who, in Adolf Hitler's view, represented not only the Reich but Europe as a whole.

I also stood in front of the gate to the courtyard of honor of the Imperial Palace of Schönbrunn, a building designed by Fischer von Erlach. I cast a critical eye on the proportions of the entrance pylons with their heavy, massive bases before turning my attention to the palace. At the time, I had no idea how much I would have to deal with a design for years to come, the design of a 291

monumental pylon, or rather a huge column with a rectangular cross-section, crowned with an eagle. It was to become the "Party Monument" in Munich. Adolf Hitler had sketched the design, certainly reminiscent of the gate pylons at Schönbrunn, Speer had a plaster model made based on it, and I had been struggling critically with it since I was commissioned to redesign Munich. In late autumn 1944, I had another opportunity to express my opinion at the Führer's headquarters in the Wolf's Lair. The conversation over evening tea began with the buildings in Weimar:

Giesler, a few months ago we discussed the road construction for Munich with the park areas, then the planned three functional levels for the square in Augsburg. We should also give the forum square in Weimar park levels. I should have planned them in right away. We have to reinforce the square because it is filled in and has no immediate supporting ground. Do you see any difficulties in this?

I still thought the park levels under the square were possible in the final design. The roads along the outer sides of the building groups, which according to my design framed the square on the sides, sloped steeply in an east-west direction. At the head of the hall, the road level was about four meters lower. This allowed us to access the parking areas under the forum square from three sides without taking up any of the open space. The ventilation, supply air ducts, and exhaust shafts were also easy to accommodate. In accordance with Adolf Hitler's original requirements, the square itself was to remain completely free of vehicles and ramp cutouts for access roads.

I should arrange this as soon as we can start building again. I had to imagine what kind of traffic nightmare there would be around the forum if we didn't have parking floors, especially when there was an event in the large hall. The parking spaces were also indispensable for the daily routine of the building complex. How far along was Breker with the sculpture "Prometheus"?

I reported that I had seen the sculpture in semi-natural size in his studio in Jäckelsbruch. I was very impressed. In bronze and full size, it would have a lasting effect. The proposed location was also unusual: asymmetrical in front of the hall, with the necessary closed stone surface in the background; the monolithic base of the sculpture connected with the triple horizontal steps leading to the hall entrance

.
Bormann should ensure that photographs of the current version of Prometheus are submitted to him. He would like to gain an impression of the sculpture. Due to the location I have chosen—diagonally opposite the tower and the fountain—this sculpture acts as a counterpoint

This Prometheus will be Goethe's poem translated into sculptural form for Weimar. I have arranged for your Weimar painter friend Gugg to have an entire room at his disposal for the exhibition in the House of German Art. This will allow his landscapes, especially those featuring the magnificent buildings of the Staufer emperors, to be shown to their best advantage, in keeping with their high status. I am interested in his paintings, and I am particularly looking forward to the Apulian landscape with the Castel del Monte, which you told me about—even the sketches for this painting were impressive. It is a great pleasure for me to award the Goethe Medal to the painter Gugg!

What other sculptures and works did you see at Breker's?

Breker showed me his work for Berlin in his large studio on the Oder: the horse quadriga for the fountain on the Round Square, as well as sections of the large reliefs for the arch, all in semi-natural size, but already finished and ready for transfer to bronze casts or for translation into granite reliefs.

What I saw was extremely impressive, the sheer amount of work alone! Breker worked quickly and confidently, but at the same time like a man possessed! Of course, because he saw this task as his life's work, which demanded his complete devotion.

He told me frankly that, apart from the Prometheus for Weimar, it would be impossible for him to take on any further work for me or my buildings, either in Munich or Linz. His energy, and that of his colleagues who were able to assist him, was overstretched in the long term.

I asked him if he could at least take on the design for the frieze of the monument in Munich. He refused that too:

"Impossible, I'm committed to Berlin, I can't take on any more commissions!"

And what was left for me? Thorak was also fully booked, and he wasn't the right man for this frieze. Munich sculptors such as Bleeker and Wackerle? Both had proven their high artistic standing, if I thought of the horse tamer and the magnificent Neptune fountain, but this task was beyond their capabilities—their age alone set limits.

I didn't think the talented young artists were ready for such a job either. Speer had already taken the Viennese artist Ullmann... Adolf Hitler interrupted me:

Yes, I know you are against the frieze, but I think the overall proportions are fine, as can be seen in the model. I remained silent.

Very well, Giesler, explain to me openly and in detail your opinion of the monument for the party.

It is not easy for me, because I have to ignore the fact that it is your design that is to be realized here, and it has not escaped my notice that in my studio your final glance always falls on the model of the monument. But in my opinion, the party can only be represented in strict architecture. How would you express your worldview and your willpower differently? That is why I find your design for the column with the crowning statue of an eagle unique, strict, clear, and memorable. But this magnificent column pylon would be detracted from by too powerful a base, and even more so by a sculptural frieze.

Only the vertical tectonics of the architecture correspond to your decision at the time. And also to the representation of your goals. The eagle should be the only sculpture. I believe that any sculptural representation on the base is superfluous and appears baroque.

And besides, who could possibly master such a huge relief? Ultimately, the frieze might lack grandeur, becoming an ornament that wants to tell a story, but what story? We are no longer naive enough to have gods or demigods fighting titans and monsters, as was still possible on the frieze of the Pergamon Altar. And to depict a procession of the party's chosen ones as the theme for the frieze? We would need a Phidias for that.

Adolf Hitler laughed. I summarized that I believed his decision at that time decision could only be expressed in pure architecture. The stricter and simpler, the better. The monument would thus stand outside of time and possible criticism. I believe that such thoughts also formed the basis of Professor Troost's designs Troost, and that it was from these ideas that he created the Führerbau and the 'Eternal Guard'.

That means, said Adolf Hitler, yes to the column, no to the pedestal with the sculptural frieze.

Yes, that was his opinion. Because the horizontal, massive column base looked like a barrier when viewed from the street. You would only notice the sideways extension when you were already too close to see the whole thing. The available space was too small for a monument of this size with such a powerful base.

The transparent Eiffel Tower has the Champ de Mars to itself, the Washington Obelisk the expanse to the Potomac River. Klenze once designed a monument for Munich that was never built, the "Constitution Column": a

huge Doric column on a strict, three-step stylobate. The column was to support a heavy, square slab, followed by a cylindrical, by no means convincing top; the occasion for this monument probably did not allow for anything else. But what I like about this design is the

hard, austere, three-step base. This base could also have been drawn by Gilly. My explanations proved to him, said Adolf Hitler, that I was not only concerned with the monument in theory: "As I know you, you can also present me with a counter-design, can't you?"

His idea of a rectangular, tapered, fluted column topped with a stylized eagle was, as we architects put it, a great success. That is why I only concerned myself with the base of this column. The initial reason was that I had no sculptor available for the giant frieze.

But then I "walked" through the streets to the monument square in the overview model with a small mirror telescope.

From the main axis and from Stachus, it was easy, but it soon became apparent that the massive base closed off the street space like a barrier. From the side streets, the Goethestraße, but above all from the Luisenstraße, which is dominated by the size of the Königlicher Platz, the proportions of the monument's base seemed out of scale.

Model photographs taken from this perspective confirmed my fears:

You, my guide, deliberately gave the column pylon a rectangular cross-section. You oriented the wide surfaces toward the large street spaces of the new axis and toward the later open Stachus, and the narrow surfaces toward the small side streets.

No, I haven't come up with an alternative design yet. However, I have sketched something based on the model photos, because that was the only way I could get a clear idea of what I wanted. I tried to place the column on a two-tiered, monolithic block, which, with its tectonic scale and manageable proportions, allows the column to rise up while also supporting and anchoring it.

Around this monolithic block, I then sketched a third level: a pillar gallery with simple beams, architrave, and cornice. My intention was to loosen up the block, widen the base, and create a readable scale for the square. But I was also consciously looking for a connection. For this pillar gallery, with its austere, coffered ceiling, is ultimately nothing other than the row of pillars of Troost's "Eternal Guard." Instead of the recess for the sarcophagi, the monolith now grows at the monument, and with it the base from which the column rises.

I wonder if I have a sketch like that here in my files.

No, I don't have any documents to hand, but I could look for it tomorrow.

submit a sketch. Right now, I'm too unsure to draw with the necessary concentration.

When I was thinking about it, did I actually consider that there would need to be enough space for the entrance, the elevators, and

stairs to the top platform of the column, and that, above all, a dignified space for the flag* was necessary?

Yes, I would have taken all that into account. The flag would stand in the monolith, visible from the colonnade. The front of this colonnade is divided into seven sections, with the flag symbolically standing in the center, protected by strong laminated glass, and next to it are niches carved into the stone for the honor guard. From this "flag axis," the column rises with the eagle as a symbol of sovereignty. Adolf Hitler looked at me seriously and searchingly. I asked if I could present him with further stubborn considerations. He motioned me to do so with a wave of his hand.

Well, it goes without saying that the base of the monument, the monolith with the pillar gallery, must be made of primary rock, granite or porphyry, polished porphyry. Otherwise, it would not be believed capable of bearing and anchoring the weight of the column. But as for the column itself... Adolf Hitler interrupted me:

Now your ideas are becoming revolutionary, but go on! My thoughts went back to a conversation we had had the evening after our drive through Paris, when he had interpreted the Eiffel Tower. He had spoken of new standards made possible by new building materials, of egg shapes

, steel and concrete, and the dawn of a new age, the age of technology.

I saw excitement in Adolf Hitler's face and continued: The initial impetus came from one of my employees, an engineer who said: Reinforced concrete, it is technically and structurally sound, and also in keeping with the times. I said that may well be true, but the material does not have the durability required for a monument; it lacks the necessary stability, and it is not elegant; the bulk material does not do justice to the monument.

Nevertheless, there was a lot to be said for it, if only I thought of the technical advantages, the elevator shafts, the staircase. How could the surface of the reinforced concrete be refined? That was my next consideration. Inside, this was entirely possible with stone or bronze inlay.

But on the outside? The Greeks didn't even tolerate mortar in their temple buildings; for them, it was amorphous*. The Romans, I'm thinking of the Pantheon and especially the Colosseum and the baths, walled the formwork with bricks, braced it with brick arches, and concreted it with a mixture of brick fragments and hydraulic lime. I asked myself: Is reinforced concrete amorphous?

The steel reinforcement in the columns could disintegrate over time, Adolf Hitler interjected.

I believe this risk could be countered by the quality of the steel,

the quality of the concrete, compaction, and covering the steel with at least three centimeters of concrete. What about hairline cracks through which water could penetrate from the outside? Well, a metal skin protects against that.

You were thinking of metal as an outer skin?

Yes. At first, I thought of bronze elements. The fluting of the column makes it possible to clamp these elements together and use them as "lost formwork," thus connecting them to the reinforced concrete.

I looked at the Munich obelisk on Karolinenplatz, which is made of bronze panels. But in relation to the column, it seemed to me that even with a lightening patina, the overall impression of the powerful column would be too heavy and too dark.

There may come a time, Adolf Hitler interrupted me, when the bronze will be torn from the reinforced concrete core, just as the stones were chiseled away from the Colosseum in Rome because of the bronze anchors.

Yes, I gave up the idea of bronze. I talked to a metallurgist, and then I came up with 'silver steel' instead of bronze, i.e.

rustproof, silvery steel plates in any thickness. The metallurgist told me the alloy, but I forgot the name.

Adolf Hitler knew this alloy and told me its name.

These steel plates can be cold-formed in such a way that they overlap the webs between the fluting and, when concreted, bond firmly to the reinforced concrete core by means of anchors. The width of such a silver steel plate would correspond to a fluting, the height depends on possible expansion due to sunlight and shrinkage of the concrete core. But not only the horizontal joints on the webs, also the vertical joints would have to be covered with plates if the surface is continuous.

I can well imagine it: on the austere, minimalist base monolith with its pillar gallery stands this silvery shimmering column, which still catches the light in the fluting, without heaviness, almost unreal; and at the top it bears the gilded eagle with its wings spread horizontally, slightly backward. A dignified monument, made of the building materials of our technological age.

Adolf Hitler sat silently in his chair with his eyes closed. He opened his eyes, looked at me for a moment, and then said: "I had always imagined the monument in granite."

I thought to myself: Perhaps I am already too familiar with the idea

I saw this column made of light steel, weightless, almost transparent, dissolved by the silvery, angular fluting.

And the base, I had imagined a smoke-gray stone in South Tyrol, partly tinged with a delicate gray-red, with huge blocks and slabs. I had been told it was a type of porphyry, but I had only ever seen porphyry in a dark red.

This South Tyrolean stone would be perfect for the silver steel. Speer had the granite, and as far as I could see, he had complete control over the available granite deposits. Therefore, if the monument was to be built in granite, I would ask that Speer take charge of the monument in due course and consider it his contribution to the redesign of Munich.

Adolf Hitler looked at me in surprise and then said dryly: "After all..."

I think I have a say in that too! I admit that your view of the monument is interesting, and I will consider your arguments.

Show me a sketch tomorrow.

The next evening, I presented my sketch to Adolf Hitler and gave a brief explanation. Finally, I quoted from the thoughts of the young architect Friedrich Gilly. He explained his 1797 design for the monument to Frederick the Great with a commitment to simplicity: "Every waste of wealth is superfluous. Not Corinthian, not rich splendor, but rather simple beauty and dignity, solid, indestructible

mass, an honorable monument. Large also in scale and thus awe-inspiring in size."

Adolf Hitler decided in favor of my proposal.

Had I really convinced him, or was his approval influenced by the fact that at that time he was almost exclusively interested in the architectural designs for his hometown of Linz on the Danube?

But it was by no means an easy approval to obtain. My explanations had undoubtedly impressed him: a solitary decision, a visionary view, an idea driven by willpower can only be represented in pure architecture!

* ?

*

In cities, the layout

is a reflection of the fate of a people; only

the towers and domes rising up in the

silhouette speak

of the logic in the worldview of their builders,

the ultimate causes and effects in their universe.

Oswald Spengler

The Decline of the West: Macrocosm 299

Dissonances

A necessary digression 301

Professor Paul Bonatz

In 1934, Professor Bonatz triggered a protest from the party with his Basel interview, in which he criticized the planned buildings on Königlicher Platz in Munich in a manner that was by no means well-founded. The response was particularly strong from the Gau leadership in Stuttgart, which dug up the past, claiming that Bonatz had been a leading member of the "Workers' and Soldiers' Council" after the World War. It seemed as if

Bonatz had thus sidelined himself from all upcoming state and party construction projects.

I had known Prof. Bonatz for years. This explains why the Führer's deputy, Rudolf Hess, informed by his cultural advisor Schulte-Strathaus, asked me to help resolve these disagreements. I was commissioned to mediate with the Württemberg Gau leadership and to stand up for Bonatz.

I was happy to do so, because when I worked for him in 1931, he told me about an anonymous letter. It demanded that he — as an active National Socialist — no more assignments. Bonatz shrugged it off at the time. I held that in high regard.

Before the meeting with the Gau leadership, I spoke with Prof. Bonatz. He assured me that his interview in Basel had been misinterpreted and deliberately distorted by the journalists. His comments on the planned buildings in Munich had not exceeded the bounds of a "difference of opinion" customary among architects. For reasons of collegiality, he said he would never criticize Prof. Troost. Bonatz suspected that the Basel interview was, as he put it, a deliberate piece of journalistic gossip because he had encroached on Swiss territory with the construction of the Basel museum.

My intervention on Bonatz's behalf with the Gau leadership was successful. As a freelance employee, he now worked for Dr. Todt on important bridge structures for the motorways and was entrusted with major tasks in the redesign of German cities.

I invited Professor Bonatz to the topping-out ceremony for "Burg Sonthofen"; I wanted to... He wanted to make some of his employees who were Bonatz students happy. Bonatz came and was thrilled by the originality of the building and by the 302

the carpenters' craftsmanship. The topping-out ceremony was unique. Never before had I experienced such a building community, such perfect unity between the client, the builders, the craftsmen, and the architect. Dr. Ley was a client who was enthusiastic about building and design, a stroke of luck for the architect and the builders. We felt that we were not just respected as workers, and everyone was aware of that.

After the war, a book by Professor Bonatz was published; I read it in my cell in the War Crimes Prison and was not at all surprised by the change in its author. I was only surprised by his account of some things that did not correspond to reality. For example,

his description of the topping-out ceremony in Sonthofen, where Bonatz, the guest of honor, was greeted by the builder, Dr. Ley, with the words: "What a wonderful profession and important calling you architects have!" Bonatz describes the topping-out ceremony as follows:

"...First Ley spoke, totally drunk, his face red; but that didn't bother him. When he ran out of things to say, he would take a deep breath and start again, very slowly. 'And I believe in...' and then he remembered something else he believed in, and when that was over, he started again very slowly:

. . . And I believe in . . . ' In this way, the thoughts did not necessarily have to be related to each other. ? Then a young upstart appeared, about twenty-three years old, so twenty years old when he came to power . . . *"

I interrupted my reading because I thought a sincere "Ugh" was in order. Dr. Ley was no despiser of wine, but to accuse him of total drunkenness on the morning of the topping-out ceremony was going too far for me.

, Ley had spoken to the guests of honor before turning to the construction workers and craftsmen, to whom he expressed his gratitude for their work and his commitment: his belief in the nation, in the German worker, and in the future of Germany.

When Ley spoke, his face soon turned red, which bothered him greatly; he suffered from a war injury, having been shot down as a pilot.

The "young upstart" was the youthful-looking Dr. Frauendorfer, who spoke in a matter-of-fact, cultured manner about "craftsmanship in the development of the national economy."

So what was all that nonsense? You could expect something like that from an arrogant hack, but not from Bonatz? It got even better, because Bonatz not only disparaged in his book, his distortions led to outright untruthfulness. I now saw him in a different light, even though he had already betrayed my trust in the summer of 1944,

which made him contemptible in my eyes. To explain this, some background information is necessary.

In 1939, I organized a competition for the steel construction of the new Munich Central Station based on my design. Stahlbau Klönne in Dortmund, with Professor Bonatz as a consultant, submitted the best entry. Under Klönne's leadership, a working group consisting of the Finns Klönne, Krupp, and Jucho was formed. Bonatz was hired as a freelancer, and in 1940 I commissioned him to lead the station planning. Adolf Hitler, whom I had informed in advance, agreed: "Giesler, you are responsible for the redesign of Munich, and you will decide on the selection and deployment of the architects you want to work with." Bonatz repeatedly approached me afterwards: "Please introduce me to the Führer, whom I greatly admire!" I took advantage of Adolf Hitler's satisfaction with a successful phase of planning: "My Führer, may I introduce you to introduce him to Professor Bonatz on your next visit? He looked at me for a long time with a furrowed brow. Is that necessary? I think it will help the cause of the main station. Adolf Hitler looked over the models, then at me: All right, for your sake, Giesler.

The introduction took place with polite, even gracious remarks from Adolf Hitler and a handshake at the beginning and end. Bonatz said to me afterwards: "Thank you, Mr. Giesler! I am very impressed by the Führer's fascinating personality." Adolf Hitler did not mention Bonatz to me again until I recommended him for another important assignment in 1943.

An exhibition entitled "New German Architecture" was being prepared in Ankara. Models of the buildings in Sonthofen, Weimar, Augsburg, and "Hohe Schule" were to be shown from my work. Without a doubt, this exhibition also had political significance. Adolf Hitler decided that I should open it with a tribute and explanation on behalf of Germany.

It was the most stressful time of my life. In the area of Army Group Russia-North, the 16th and 18th Armies, the rear areas, and the Baltic States, I was responsible for the OT Task Force Russia-North, for a multifaceted construction project involving about 200,000 workers, mostly from the Baltic States, under the technical supervision of my architects and engineers.

which were actually intended to serve the redevelopment of German cities. Unless they were deployed at the front, they were assigned to the OT.

Although I was able to rely on my tireless staff in technical and organizational activities, but the leadership tasks of such a large unit also included coordination with the army group, the field marshals, the commanding generals, and the regional commissioners in the Baltic States. In all negotiations, my close connection with the Führer's headquarters was of great benefit to me; it gave me the time I needed to work on the plans for Linz even at Lake Peipus.

with the Führer's headquarters proved useful; it gave me time to work on the plans for Linz myself at Lake Peipus.

With new plans, I traveled to headquarters to convince Adolf Hitler, when the opportunity arose, that I could not go to Ankara due to excessive workload. He tried to change my mind: "You can limit your stay in Ankara to a few days. Consider it a break and a distraction. The necessary stopover will give you the opportunity to see the Acropolis and the Parthenon! No? Who will open the exhibition in your place?"

"My Führer, I suggest Professor Bonatz. He has many acquaintances in Turkey, and many of his former students hold influential positions there."

"Bonatz? I have a bad feeling about that."

Then, after a short pause: "All right, if you say so, although I would have preferred you to go."

Before Bonatz left for Ankara with the exhibition team, we had another conversation at my house in Munich, where he was a frequent guest, along with Alwin Seifert and the versatile Emil Preetorius.

The conversation brought a surprise, because without any apparent reason, Bonatz spoke about the architectural design of the Royal Square. He said that east side of the square, built by Professor Troost, had a feminine tendency: the Führer building on the left, the same on the right, a temple of honor on the left, a temple of honor on the right, indecision back and forth instead of masculine uniqueness!

I said to him: If you perceive that as a feminine tendency, well, for me this square testifies to the noble spirit of its designer.

Troost's buildings on Königlicher Platz* are full of power and severity, energetic, and at the same time they remain tectonically calm and restrained. They are not epigones of Klenze's palace buildings; they have enough individuality to be witnesses of our 20th century. Their calm horizontality allows Klenze's obelisk to come into its own as a vertical force.

The buildings are offset to the side so that they provide the necessary reinforcement of the square, which was previously lacking, without dominating it. The transparent honorary temples convey the scale on all sides. From the square, they lead the eye to the Brienner Strasse and the Obelisk, and further into the Munich of old tradition, while at the same time bearing witness to the events of recent decades.

It seems to me, I said to Bonatz, that you are neither familiar with the context nor do you understand the meaning of the architectural arrangement. You have certainly never experienced the march to a rally on the Royal Square ...

Bonatz made a dismissive gesture with his hand.

"Of course not," I continued, "otherwise you would know about the 'masculine uniqueness' that you are missing. From the city, past the Feldherrnhalle and the obelisk, the columns march with their standards between the temples of honor with the dead witnesses of the first awakening. This symbolizes the path of the party, which you cannot obstruct with "uniqueness"! The view of the Obelisk and the city must remain unobstructed, because that is where life flows into the square. The Klenze Propylaea form the conclusion.

I wanted to change the subject, because I saw no possibility of reaching an understanding. But Bonatz now spoke of the sarcophagi that would be displayed in the temples of honor. But that's not the point, I said to him. They can't be seen from the street or the square. You have to climb the steps, enter the space formed by the pillars, and only then do you see the sarcophagi below. How is that different, I asked him, from the tombs and sarcophagi in the Roman Pantheon, in the cloisters of Pisa, in Santa Croce, in Florence Cathedral? And there's no need to talk about the cult of the dead, is there? It's inherent in all cultures, communities, and religions, and the Christian Church made its followers not only witnesses, but martyrs, even saints! That was the end of the subject.

As I pieced together Bonatz's criticism of the buildings on Königlicher Platz, I noticed a strange similarity to his interview in Basel, the content of which Bonatz had indignantly dismissed at the time as deliberate journalistic gossip. What was the reason behind this obvious provocation shortly before his departure for Ankara? But Bonatz wasn't done yet; he had something else to add: now he was attacking me and the new Munich Central Station. On the orders of Adolf Hitler, the "Europa-Spur" (Europe track), which he had designed in 1942, was also to be introduced into the new central station for passenger trains. The two broad-gauge tracks required for passenger trains seemed to necessitate a 20-meter extension of the station polygon. I didn't want to change anything about the structure and believed that two or three standard-gauge tracks could be dispensed with. Speer agreed with me, even if he may have had other reasons for doing so*. If the Reichsbahn later decided not to go along with our plan and insisted on enlarging the dome diameter by 20 meters, Adolf Hitler's decision would be final, which could not be expected at that time, in 1943.

I therefore found it incomprehensible why Bonatz was now beginning to argue against the broad gauge. I told him that I was not convinced by his arguments; on closer inspection, they amounted to belated and pointless resistance to the technical development from the stagecoach to the rail vehicle.

vehicles. He would then also have to condemn the development of the car with the logical progression from country roads to highways. In any case, I would describe this development from the standard gauge of 1435 millimeters of the English stagecoach to the broad gauge of 3600 millimeters as reasonable; it would enable the exchange of goods across Europe, benefit passenger transport, and lead to a balance between rail and road.

Bonatz twisted his mouth; he always spoke out of the corner of his mouth, a peculiar trait that reinforced his often transparent irony, which sometimes took on a sarcastic edge; I actually appreciated this trait in him, even when it was directed at me. "Why then do you reject my technically sound proposal for the location and design of the new main station," he said, "the 'sensible solution' of placing the station far outside the city, running east-west, next to the tracks?"

Mr. Bonatz, I'll tell you frankly and bluntly! First, because it makes no sense at all from an urban planning perspective; second, because it would be your Stuttgart station in Munich, only instead of a terminus station, it would now be a side station. And besides, because my feet fall asleep from boredom when I have to look at this 'sensible solution' for any length of time, especially since I not only convinced the Führer with my design – he recognized its merits at first glance! – but also the Ministry of Transport and the Reichsbahn engineers. And finally, because after three and a half years of intensive work by all those involved, it is now clear that this joint planning will result in a technical masterpiece that meets modern transport requirements.

There was discord at the end of the evening. For a moment, I was tempted to call the diplomat Walther Hewel at the Führer's headquarters: I'll take the job in Ankara after all. Or should I contact Bormann directly? What would have come of it! I refrained from doing so; I couldn't imagine Bonatz capable of such character assassination.

He said goodbye and thanked me again for making his trip to Ankara possible. Bonatz traveled to Ankara with the exhibition team. I was told that the journey through the Balkans to the Bosphorus took six days. In a special car attached to military trains, Bonatz searched for the third man. He found him playing skat, wearing a pointed cap, as has been confirmed.

So there I was, sitting in my cell in Landsberg—it was 1952—and reading his book, which I had borrowed for a few hours, and I had to conclude that his account had turned into a banal untruth:

"The work on the absurdity of the Munich city railway station, with its steel dome 280 meters in diameter, became more and more painful for me. At first, I was intrigued by the

engineering and architectural problem of creating something out of nothing but steel, glass, and copper. But the joy of playing with form could not, in the long run, suppress my insight into the fundamental flaw. So, together with my team, I drew a 'reasonable solution'. A station laid out in an east-west direction as a through station, far out in the countryside. But this was not allowed to be shown, on pain of a fit of rage.

What a target for the bombs, the huge circus measuring 400 meters, with ring structures! Impossible to miss! What fun and incentive for enemy pilots! When the seriousness of the bombing gradually dawned on us in 1942 and 1943, the high-ranking gentleman came up with the idea of eight flak towers, which were to be erected flanking the entrance to the four roads at the crossroads, 100 meters away from the target! What a pretty fireworks display that would have been when all eight towers fired at the same time? It was actually even more naive than the admiral's idea; it was like playing with toy soldiers and fortresses.

But that wasn't the worst of it: now the "Führer" invented the Großbahn (large railway). It was to have a track gauge of four meters, two-story cars, each 40 meters long and 6.80 meters high, 6 meters wide, with six hundred people in each car, and the train was to travel at a speed of 200 kilometers per hour. Three hours after leaving Berlin, it could spit out four thousand Berliners in Munich and vice versa, several times a day. What progress! If a railway worker said it couldn't be done, he was thrown out as a defeatist.

We were now supposed to incorporate this complete madness into the central axis of the dome station. Four tracks with platforms and luggage required another 70 meters. Fine! I said, then we'll just have to increase the diameter of the dome from 280 to 350 meters. If we're going to do it, let's do it right. No cowardice in this great era. I hoped that the bubble would finally burst.

But then some people got cold feet, and the plans came to a standstill.

If I had to give a single reason for emigrating to a foreign country, it would probably be to escape this madness."

As I recall, Bonatz and his "team" of engineers and structural engineers from Klönne, Krupp, and Jucho were enthusiastically working on the "unreasonable" Munich "circular railway station."

It was certainly appealing to design this transparent architectural engineering structure in line with modern thinking, made of steel, aluminum, glass, and mosaic, to erect a monument to technology. It was completely different from the Stuttgart station, made of travertine stone and wooden beams, which was more suited to the horses of Godfrey of Bouillon than to Dorpmüller's locomotives and the streams of mass traffic.

First of all, the steel dome was not 280 meters in diameter, but

245 meters, but does it really matter if it's 35 meters more or less? I think so. We architects, and engineers and structural engineers even more so, take them seriously. They took the span of the supporting structures and the proportions of the dome seriously. As Bonatz writes, copper was not used as a material in this building. What Bonatz describes as a "sensible solution" was neither sensible in terms of urban planning nor justified "far out in the suburbs." You don't squeeze a major city's main station "far out" into a residential area with two-story houses. And from a transportation standpoint, considering the seven directions of travel with frequent trains and the S-Bahn and U-Bahn lines, the "sensible solution" was unreasonable.

How about if Munich's old main station were only accessible from one side, for example from Arnulfstraße: it would start at the tracks of Starnberg station, followed by the tracks of the actual main station for long-distance trains and finally the tracks of Holzkirchen station! Already at track 16 in Düsseldorf, this means a trip to Cologne, which requires physically fit travelers.

The polygon station planned for Munich not only had four entrances, it was a station on all sides, it also had the shortest distances to the platforms and combined the advantages of a terminus station with the operational advantages of a through station. For me – and not just for me alone – Bonatz's proposed "solution of reason" was unreasonable in every respect. What is unreasonable should not be presented; it would be a waste of time.

A target for bombs? Of course, we agreed on that: we didn't want war nor bombs, but so what? Which important station was spared? Even the wooden structure of Stuttgart's modest station went up in flames.

It wasn't the 'high and mighty' who invented eight flak towers, but I held these I consider shelters and protective spaces to be essential. They should not be erected, but rather constructed. They had so many purposes to serve that they did not even offer space for a café, as was the case with the Stuttgart railway station tower. They were purely functional buildings. At that time – it was the end of 1939 – I thought that light anti-aircraft guns could be placed on the platforms of the towers to provide close protection for the station. I should probably have discussed this question with the veteran worker and soldier representative Bonatz, then I would have been spared Adolf Hitler's dismissive hand gesture, because he considered this "anti-aircraft measure meaningless."

"Now the 'Führer' has invented the 'big railway,'" Bonatz writes mockingly, and it becomes clear that he is not a polemicist, not a fighter for the cause, he is wasting ink. The 200 km/h speed of the trains? In the Stuttgart area of all places, 35 years later, the German Federal Railways wants to build a new line that will enable this speed!

The broad-gauge railway in an east-west and north-south direction was intended to serve European freight and passenger transport and, in a forward-looking connection with the standard-gauge system and inland and maritime freight, enable the operation of large containers, today known as container transport, in order to relieve the roads and, thanks to the speed of the trains, also the airspace. This was the idea behind the broad-gauge railway, and not, as Bonatz sneers, "Three hours after leaving Berlin, it (the train) can spit out four thousand Berliners in Munich and vice versa."

I asked myself: Who was it, after Bonatz, who was the railway engineer who said it couldn't be done and was then dismissed as a defeatist? I don't know of anyone. Or does Bonatz mean State Secretary Kleinmann from the Ministry of Transport, who was replaced by Ganzenmüller in 1942 at Speer's suggestion? But that had nothing to do with Munich Central Station or the broad-gauge railway.

As for the "madness" that Bonatz and his "team" were supposed to build into the central axis of Munich's domed station: the Ministry of Transport did not demand four tracks with platforms and luggage platforms, but two tracks on one platform. This did not require 70 meters, as Bonatz writes, but rather the dome span had to be enlarged by 20 meters. Even if the Ministry of Transport had insisted on these additional 20 meters, a decision by Adolf Hitler would have been necessary, which, in my opinion, would have been impossible for us.

During the entire planning period for the station, there was never any mention of a diameter of 280 or even 350 meters. It was left to Bonatz to write this when he returned from Turkey. What a disgrace to falsify the diameter of the dome by over 100 meters! How unworthy of an architect of such repute! At the beginning of 1943, plans for the redesign of Munich were shelved.

One evening in August 1944, at the Führer's headquarters in the Wolf's Lair, an adjutant interrupted our joint work on the plans for Linz and handed the Führer a stack of new reports and news items. Adolf Hitler read them standing up. Suddenly he looked at me, handed me the sheet he had just read, and said without any emphasis: "Giesler, there's your Bonatz." I read: Bonatz had asked the Turkish government for asylum; he wanted to stay in Ankara. Then he had made his inaugural visit to the enemy embassies!

It was probably best for my family, whom I had to care for after my long years of imprisonment, that Bonatz never encountered me again. I will never forget Adolf Hitler's gaze and his calm remark: "Giesler, there's your Bonatz."

I also found Bonatz's criticism of the planned "Triumphal Arch" in Berlin to be unobjective and malicious. In his book, he gets worked up about the size of the arch and says: "That's twice the height of the Stuttgart train station tower." (The measure of all things!) I don't know the exact heights of either structure, so I can only say: What a comparison!

The Bonatz tower above the cardboard roofs of the Stuttgart train platforms served as a café where people ate cheesecake. The arch designed by Adolf Hitler in the early 1920s – deliberately heavy – was intended as a monument in the center of the Reich capital to commemorate the soldiers who fell in the World War! Bonatz goes on to write – and this may characterize him: "This triumphal arch was also to feature a 600-meter-long relief frieze, 11 meters high." As an architect, I calculated back and forth and couldn't figure out how to fit 600 meters in. How was such a distortion possible? Many years later, I talked to Arno Breker about it: How long was the frieze on the "arch" in Berlin? I saw parts of it back then in your studio on the Oder.

Arno Breker thought about it and then said: There was no sculpted frieze around the building. I was tasked with decorating the four pillars of the large arch with reliefs – that was four times about 16 meters, making a total of 64 meters.

"I see," I said, "so Bonatz rounded up the figures a little in his critical description, as was customary at the time! Do you know his book 'Leben und Bauen' (Life and Building)?"

"No, but I knew him very well! But what's the point of all this, how am I supposed to understand your comment?"

Well, Bonatz writes about the Berlin "arch" and mocks it... I

quote: "This triumphal arch was also to have a six-hundred-meter-long relief frieze, 11 meters high (the frieze on the Parthenon is 92 centimeters high)."

Arno Breker interrupted me: "This ... such a ... what a comparison!

you can't even see the Parthenon frieze, it was discovered and made public by the photographer Walther Hege, so to speak.

I continued: "The talented sculptor Arno Breker was demoted to this galley work (chiseling the 600-meter frieze)..." Arno Breker, agitated and angry: "That's outrageous... a deliberate smear... but I wouldn't put it past him!

"Couldn't Bonatz have been mistaken in his calculation? Did he even know the arch? Besides, he praises you.

Arno Breker: I can do without that! Calculation? Well, with Bonatz, everything was calculation! A mistake with the 600 meters? No, he was in my studio too often for that, and he knew my assignments!

Oh, I remember exactly the superlatives he whispered from the corner of his mouth—that was him! That was exactly how he was, this... But people will believe him, and those who know better won't get a chance to speak or will remain silent! I will not remain silent, I said to Arno Breker, thinking that we are all committed to truthfulness, in our work and in our statements, because that is the only way a man can stand before himself. Let others boast that they have successfully disguised themselves.

Bonatz concludes his book modestly, conversing with the good Lord, and ends with the – surely sincere – sentence: "My last word is my daily prayer, and it is gratitude." Inshallah, I might add!

Professor Alwin Seifert

I don't want to interfere, Reichsleiter Bormann told me. But

With Seifert, you will have the same experience I did. That was in January 1939. I had hired landscape designer and architect Alwin Seifert as a freelancer for the department. He was to serve as a consultant for the planning of green spaces in the redesign of Munich.

Bormann knew Seifert from a joint project, the garden and landscape design in Pullach and on the Obersalzberg; Seifert's exuberance may have clashed with the sober perseverance of the estate manager Bormann. Later I learned that there was much more behind this "gaining experience."

I had worked with Seifert in the Allgäu and in Thuringia. Now he was to be the landscape trustee for the Munich office and the conscience for all environmental obligations. He was to represent the interests of the landscape vis-à-vis municipal concerns. His idiosyncrasies had to be accepted. My colleagues and I knew what he was worth as a landscape designer and lawyer, but he knew it even better himself. At times, his irony and sarcasm turned into arrogance and became hurtful or even malicious, "then he was 'really an insufferable person,'" as he writes about himself.

He often spent Saturday afternoons at my home or in the beautiful garden he had laid out for me. We would plan the continuation of Sckell's work, a hundred years later: the extension of the English Garden to the north. Together we planned the green spaces in Munich and the surrounding area, keeping the Isar Valley and the Isar field in the south of the city free. It was to remain free of industry and high-rise buildings so as not to obstruct the flow of fresh air to the city center. We talked

of flowers, gardens, landscape conservation and landscape-friendly construction, and the essence of life. Alwin Seifert was a good storyteller with often surprising ideas. He imaginatively described the connections between soil and plant communities, the Alpine region and its building culture.

And yet there was always a certain self-centeredness to it all. He showered personalities, politicians, artists, architects, and their work with effusive praise, only to dismiss them in the next conversation or at the next opportunity with caustic remarks and quick, often completely unfounded judgments.

and their work, only to dismiss them in the next conversation or at the next opportunity with biting remarks and quick, often completely unfounded judgments. He spoke enthusiastically about the herb gardens in the Dachau concentration camp, which if they were his own domain. Under his instruction, he said, composting and organic fertilization were practiced there, and a new garden culture of all kinds of useful plants, herbs, and medicinal herbs had sprung up on large areas of land. A new garden culture of all kinds of useful plants, herbs, and medicinal herbs had emerged.

But hardly any afternoon so rich in topics ended without an attempt at city-related can-pulling: Alwin Seifert, for example, tried hard to replace Munich's city planning officer with a confidant of his heart. I always met this with persistent resistance, but with a friendly smile.

It became increasingly apparent to me that no matter how firmly established circumstances and facts were, Alwin Seifert would casually bend them to suit his own purposes. He was never at a loss for good proverbs and wise advice: "You still have to learn to step out of your own shadow," he said to me, the younger man, in a very meaningful way; he himself had been able to do so for a long time, as he proclaimed.

Once he told me about a letter he had written to a person whom we all respected and to whom he owed all his support and advancement. The letter was pure malice. "Mr. Seifert, you can't do that. I find this letter unbelievable. You can't do that to this man." I don't know whether he sent the letter after all, but in any case I now saw Seifert in a different light.

Two years later, I received a similar letter from him myself. After that, it was no longer possible for us to communicate or work together.

After the war, Alwin Seifert described the discord between us in his book *Ein Leben für die Landschaft* (A Life for the Landscape) in his own way, which was extremely primitive and harsh. I could have ignored it if the defamation had not been attributed to Alwin Seifert. This compels me to present the events from my point of view.

Shortly after Stalingrad, in early February 1943, my brother, as Gauleiter in Munich, spoke at a large student assembly in the Deutsches Museum. There were various reasons for this: university and college teaching staff and student bodies had complained about abuses

. The first activities of the "White Rose" resistance group may already have been emerging. Furthermore, the student body had complained that young female students were claiming the places of the wounded and convalescent instead of doing military service. 314

This also applied to medical students, who had been granted leave from the front for their studies. But there was more.

I had access to the letters and reports that my brother had received, and I also attended the event at the German Museum. I was therefore able to form my own opinion. It was not my brother who had insulted the female students; rather, some of these "daughters from good and influential families" felt insulted because the truth had been told.

There may have been a dozen or so among the thousand in the gallery who took offense and wanted to leave the hall. Let the geese cackle and run, my brother said to SS-Obergruppenführer von Eberstein, whose police officers were noting the names of those who felt offended and acted indignant.

On the night of February 7 to 8, I traveled to Berlin to attend the memorial service for Dr. Todt, who had died in a plane crash the previous year. On the train, I met Alwin Seifert. Along with many others, we stood in the aisle for a brief conversation. Seifert was eager to express his sympathy in a loud voice for the girls who had appeared as male figures at the student assembly in the German Museum. He was pleased with his pun and repeated it in various variations.

Of course, I replied, that suits you, always for what there's something against it, and always for it when there's something for it." Seifert replied, "You'll see all sorts of things in the near future... that was just the beginning—I know what's going on!"

I calmly and quietly but firmly pointed out to him that we had interested listeners and that if he really believed he knew something substantial, he should tell the people who were responsible for such matters. On February 17, the senseless uprising of the Scholl siblings' "White Rose" took place, accompanied by the distribution of leaflets calling for resistance and sabotage. The perpetrators of this riot were sentenced to death by the People's Court on February 27 under martial law. Shortly thereafter, I received a summons for questioning by the Gestapo. "They can come to me if they want something from me," was my reaction, and I informed my brother, who was well informed.

But he believed that I should respect this institution just as I wanted my workplace to be respected. So I entered the Wittelsbach Palace for the first time—not as an architect, but to be interrogated by the Gestapo.

I was accused of failing in my duty to report immediately on the conversation I had had with Professor Seifert on the evening of February 7 in the corridor of car no. XY. There was a heated but objective discussion, because I did not feel obliged to

report every piece of gossip and every stupid remark to the Secret State Police in a self-important manner. Besides, according to what I was being accused of, they were already well informed. Seifert's remarks were now, of course, after the uproar caused by the White Rose, being given exaggerated importance.

I spoke on Seifert's behalf and described him as a great landscape designer, but also as an equally great talker, albeit a harmless one. This spared Alwin Seifert from further investigation. A few days later, I received a letter from him, which I could pin on the Spiegel. In it, he accused me of reporting him to the Gestapo because of his statements. And in his book, he presents this as fact.

This raises the question: What is actually true of everything Seifert wrote about the Giesler brothers? He did not stand up for Professor Vorhölzer, who returned from Turkey at my instigation and became a trusted architect for the office. Seifen was also not in the

"Dienste der Stadt München" (Services of the City of Munich); rather, he was a freelancer for the General Building Authority.

I did not "rage" on the night train to Berlin, nor did I ever report Seifert to the Gestapo; that is not my way. On the contrary, I took him under my protection there and later, after his malicious and insolent letter, shielded him from Bormann and the party chancellery. My brother took no action against him, not even in his capacity as Minister of Culture.

And since the Gestapo had hinted to him that he should expect to be arrested, Alwin Seifert writes, and he knew that only insolence could help him now, he reported himself as a guest to SS-Obergruppenführer Pohl, the head of administration of the concentration camps. But his arrest was delayed, and so he continued to work on landscape conservation and,

as he also reports, gave a lecture in Switzerland a year and a half later, in September 1944. He returned with rich gifts to continue his *vivere pericolosamente*.

But no one in the dictatorship wanted to arrest him. It was only the emissaries of Christian and democratic tolerance, the Americans, who locked him up—why, I don't know. They didn't even know about his "insolence" yet!

But with or without insolence, Pohl did not need to bother with soap to register as a guest at the Dachau concentration camp! For years he had been working enthusiastically and with great success in

Himmler's herb garden, enthusiastically and with great success, as he repeatedly assured me and as Father Augustin later testified. After the collapse, I often asked myself: How can all these distortions and twists be explained? For therein lie Seifert,

Bonatz and Speer, to whom my "necessary digression" is limited, are not alone.

The desire to denigrate has infected all kinds of intellectuals. Even a highly respected figure such as Professor Dr. Georg Lill, former head of the Bavarian State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, has been caught up in this epidemic; for Dehlinger refers to him with the assertion that "one of Hermann Giesler's young architects" wanted to know in 1938 "whether the more valuable part of the Ducal Palace in Ludwigstraße should be demolished first or last."

In January 1939, I began my work in Munich with the establishment of the Office of the Chief Building Officer and gathering all the necessary information and conducting site visits. We then looked into the construction pit of the demolished former Ducal Palace on Ludwigstraße. How could this happen? The Bavarian State Building Authority gave me the somewhat embarrassed explanation that the new Reichsbank building was to be erected here.

bank building was to be built here. So that's why the beautiful palace was sacrificed! The Ministerialrat Professor Gablonsky, as head of the State Building Administration, and especially Professor Dr. Georg Lill, as head of the Bavarian State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, were responsible for protecting this palace. Instead of pointing to the monument protection register and then pointing to himself, he points to me and insinuates that "one of Hermann Giesler's young architects" was responsible for this absurdity. He was obviously hoping to increase the credibility of his statement by confusing the years: he allowed the palace to be demolished in 1938, b u t I began my work in January 1939.

The view into the excavation pit of the former ducal palace and the folder containing carefully photographed details of the palace before its demolition, which was given to me as a kind of consolation, were enough for me: I instructed my colleague Dr. von Freyhold to take effective measures to protect the historical monuments in the area entrusted to me. Perhaps he did not actually ask the State Office on one occasion, but that was appropriate, as the example shows.

Mr. Speer or Mr. Reeps The
reversal

A weekly newspaper reported that Mr. Speer had accepted an invitation from the BBC to appear as a star in a documentary program. At the request of his English hosts, he reversed his name, which was tainted by the label "war criminal." He arrived in London as Mr. Reeps... and was arrested. Although he was released from his cell the next day, he was only granted a short stay.

An insignificant incident, but one that is indicative of the fact that Speer's complete transformation now also led to the reversal of his name. Ironically, it was an English newspaper, the Daily Mirror, that described Speer-Reeps' behavior as a "peculiar mixture of humility and impertinence." But this only outlines the basis on which the behavior, writings, and words of this pragmatic penitent, who strives to stand alone at the top in this field as well, can be interpreted.

Speer in "Playboy"

In the summer of 1971, my son brought me a strange magazine from America: Playboy, June 1971, featuring a major interview with "Albert Speer, Hitler's closest confidant and second-in-command." This interview in the sensationalist magazine is framed by salacious and appropriately illustrated jokes and many naked "girls" showing off their breasts.

The answers that the great ethicist and titan of repentance gave to the inquisitive interviewer Eric Norden for the Playboy magazine, which was read by millions, are unique, and far beyond that, they contain passages so vile that they become unbelievable even in Speer's preferred dimension.

The question arises: Did Speer really say that? Apparently so, because he did not distance himself from this Playboy Norden interview.

To my knowledge, the interview has not yet been published in Germany. I will therefore examine some of the most serious excerpts in order to assess the position of the changed Speer and his sometimes cynical tendencies.

. First, Playboy magazine explains the reason for and purpose of the interview: In order to understand the origins and contours of the Speer legend and to examine the complexity and inner contradictions of Speer's character, Playboy sent Eric Norden to interview the 66-year-old former Reich Minister in his friendly, wooden villa, located on a hill three miles from the picturesque university town of Heidelberg. Norden writes about it:

Speer greeted me warmly and led me into the lavishly furnished living room of his spacious home. He is still stately, with a distinguished, director-like manner. His bushy black eyebrows reminded me of the younger man I had seen in photos strolling through occupied Paris with his friend and patron Adolf Hitler.

occupied Paris. As we sat with Scotch and sodas beside a crackling fire, snow began to fall lightly outside and his three-year-old St. Bernard, Bello, snored contentedly at the feet of his mistress, who offered us plates piled high with homemade baked goods and nutritious German cakes.

The atmosphere was so relaxed and cozy that for a moment I forgot that I was talking to the man who, during World War II, had been second in command in the Third Reich after Adolf Hitler.

I had met the man whose organizational talents and energies had contributed immeasurably to the death and suffering of millions. He struck me as just another upper-middle-class German who was happy to have escaped his office and was now playing lord of the manor.

... For six weeks I studied this man, poring over his book and published interviews, as well as the numerous reviews and polemical articles in the American and European press. But as I leaned forward to turn on the tape recorder, I felt no closer to the real man behind the familiar "facade" than before.

During my research on Speer, I was frustrated by a certain vague opacity, an unreality surrounding Speer. And when we began to talk, I was faced with the same doubts I had felt when reading his book and studying his published statements: as sincere as he appeared on the surface, it seemed to me that a veil had been drawn between him and the truth.

Like some of the reviewers, I suspected that the litany of self-accusations was in itself an evasion of ultimate responsibility. Now, as I began the interview—which stretched over almost 10 days of relentless question-and-answer sessions and ended with both Speer and I on the verge of

exhaustion, this uncertainty remained, initially reinforced by his peculiar indifference. As my questions continued late into the night and resumed over breakfast the next morning, I began to realize that what disturbed me most about Speer was his calmness, the way he could accuse himself of terrible crimes in the same tone of voice with which he offered me a piece of apple pie.

But as I listened to Speer recounting the horrors and triumphs of the Third Reich, in German and in the fluent English he had learned in Spandau, as I saw the patient interest with which he tried, in the course of our exhausting sessions, to express and explain himself and his times... Then I realized that this interview and all his other confrontations with the press and the public were part of the burden he carried, part of his penance, stages on the way to a redemption that he himself recognized as unattainable."

Then the interviewer begins with questions. They offer Speer the opportunity to once again spread his dubious "mea culpa," his dramatic confessions of remorse, his distortions, and, as Norden writes, "the litany of his self-accusations" before millions of American readers.

That's not my thing, so I turn to the questions and answers that I think I can judge: Adolf Hitler's urban planning and architectural designs, Norden's conversation with Speer about the redesign of Berlin. My sons translated and read aloud:

"All that occupied me in those days," Speer says, "was my ambition to distinguish myself as Hitler's architect."

"Your ambition seemed to grow in proportion to the crimes committed by your benefactors," Norden commented.

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Speer, continuing: "I think Hitler had intended from the outset to entrust me with tasks that he had dreamed of carrying out since his youth."

Norden then asked when Hitler had first mentioned these plans.

"In the summer of 1936, he called me... and unexpectedly gave me the greatest task of my career: Together, we would redesign Berlin as a worthy capital of the Third Reich. The plans for his new Berlin were truly astonishing, and I was convinced that their implementation by me would make me one of the most famous architects in history. Hitler envisioned a gigantic new capital, renamed Germania, which would be both the seat of his empire and a monument that would forever commemorate the German people.

would make me one of the most famous architects in history. Hitler envisioned a gigantic new capital, renamed Germania, which would be both the seat of his empire and a monument that would keep his memory alive forever. The heart of the existing city was to be leveled and replaced by a three-mile-long boulevard, the

"Prachtstraße" (boulevard).

Here I interrupted and said: Speer's account is completely distorted and also factually incorrect. Look at the photo of the overview model of the Berlin redesign. Speer included it in his "Memoirs," wavering between pride and feigned sarcasm.

Look and understand what Adolf Hitler was striving for: by no means a gigantic new Reich capital, but rather to set new architectural standards and give the formless center of Berlin stability and order. In doing so, he drew on He drew on an early 19th-century architectural concept: Schinkel had planned to supplement the Great Elector's only prestigious east-west thoroughfare, Unter den Linden, with a north-south extension in order to provide the Prussian capital with an urban expansion.

Over the course of the century, the idea of a large-scale construction project fell into disrepair. It ended west of the Brandenburg Gate with Wallot's Reichstag building on Königsplatz, and Schinkel's north-south street was reduced to Wilhelm II's Siegesallee. Under Adolf Hitler, the idea of building this street was revived; it is clear that since 1925 he has been preoccupied with ideas and partial plans for this street axis

. It combines Schinkel's ideas with the generous traffic plans that the architect Mächler developed after the First World War. It is also not true, as Speer says, that the heart of the city was to be leveled. The open space for this urban redevelopment was created mainly by the abandonment of the huge railway facilities that led to the Anhalter and Potsdamer terminus stations, which were to be replaced and rendered superfluous by the planned Süd through station. Read on, "Speer's tendency is already becoming apparent.

"The magnificent avenue, twice as wide and three times as long as the Champs Elysées, stretched from the Brandenburg Gate to the decisive center of the entire complex, the 'Kuppelhalle' (domed hall)..."

Hold on, I interrupted, that's not right, but maybe Playboy Norden has caused some confusion here. The "grand avenue" was not supposed to extend from the Brandenburg Gate, but from the planned South Station northward to the square in front of the Reichstag building. It therefore ran westward past the Brandenburg Gate. As a major traffic artery, it was supposed to begin in the south at the freeway ring, cross the east-west axis, and connect to the freeway ring in the north.

And comparing the "boulevard" with the Champs Elysées is arbitrary. Even the adjacent Avenue Foch, designed in the days of horse-drawn carriages, is twice as wide as the Champs Elysées!

My sons continued translating: "... to the decisive center of the entire complex, the 'dome hall,' a gigantic, vaulted assembly hall four times the size of the Capitol building in Washington and with room for 180,000 people."

Well, well, I said, if he calculates without deducting space for access with four people per square meter, that might be about right; I know his dome hall and its dimensions. But let's continue with the text.

"On the way to the assembly hall, there was to be a huge triumphal arch 400 feet (120 meters) high, dwarfing the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, surrounded by a huge stadium for 400,000 people . . .

Objection. Speer was certainly misunderstood here; Playboy confused the location. Wasn't this giant stadium supposed to be built in Nuremberg? Or did Speer want to build the same thing again in Berlin?

This scale comes from Speer, who boasts of having surpassed Adolf Hitler's standards, which he now describes as megalomania. So what? The Circus Maximus of the Romans at the foot of the Palatine Hill offered 385,000 seats, according to Gregorovius. But let's continue.

"A massive soldiers' hall that was supposed to house the Wehrmacht high command..." Nonsense, those were two different groups of buildings.

... new headquarters for the Foreign Office, the party, and the Luftwaffe, a new parliament building for his yes-men Reichstag ..." What a jumble of descriptions!

And Speer even forgot the building for Göring

with the jumble of columns in the staircase of the Reichsmarschallamt. Here, take a look at this! I pointed to the model photo of this staircase in Speer's "Memoirs." And I can still hear Adolf Hitler's voice when

he said that the Reichstag building should be preserved . . . there it is in the overview model, clearly recognizable, I continued.

Speer then describes the planned "enormous (cyclopean) fortified

"Führer palace." I had it read to me a few times, it seemed so unlikely to me:

"A Führer palace with 22,000,000 square feet of floor space with wide reception halls, extensive gardens, and a dining room for several thousand people."

There is no doubt about the inaccuracy of this floor space, nor is there any conversion error from square feet to square meters, as I initially accepted, because after this strange assertion, Speer goes on to make the following comparison:

"Next to Hitler's (Speer's, not Hitler's!) planned palace complex, even the largest building of its kind in history, Nero's famous

'Golden House' with its 11,000,000 square feet of floor space would be dwarfed into insignificance."

No, I said to my sons, this is not a mistake, not a misunderstanding or a mishearing on the part of the Playboy interviewer Norden, but a foolish, manipulated representation by Speer. Here he is presenting a blatant untruth that even a blind man could

with a stick—that is to say, one that any architect can measure with a ruler. With such silliness, Speer probably wanted to demonstrate Hitler's wickedness to the sympathetic American reader.

I took a ruler and we started calculating. According to Speer's own plans*, I determined that instead of 22,000,000 square feet – that's two million square meters! – the entire building site would have covered an impressive 254,800 square meters. And the built-up area would have been 106,000 square meters, including the "dining hall for several thousand people" and also including the office wings for the Reich, presidential, and Führer chancelleries. So it is the opposite of what Speer likes to portray:

Next to Nero's famous Golden House, the "Führer Palace Complex" would have shrunk into insignificance even in Speer's gigantomania, with only a quarter of Nero's

. Speer's confusion regarding floor space and scale can be clarified by a single glance at the literature:

"Nero's 'Golden House' was one kilometer square. (One million square meters, 11 million square feet). A single lake in this lavish complex later became the site of the Colosseum. The audience hall of the Flavian Palace on the Palatine Hill was considerably wider than St. Peter's Basilica. In the tepidarium of the Baths of Diocletian, Michelangelo

Angelo could have built the stately church of S. Maria degli Angeli, "which Vanvitelli later ruined," and the huge circle of Rome's station square is nothing more than the exedra of the same baths. Similarly, the Piazza Navona coincides with the Circus Agonalis of Domitian. Purely through the defiant exuberance, indeed the hubris of their dimensions and the self-evident perfection of their execution, they proclaim they proclaim with elation what man is capable of achieving on his own, and in this vigorous confidence, despite their late origin, they are still very much in keeping with the spirit of ancient paganism."

I added: "Never before, when contemplating the Roman architectural giants, whether the Colosseum, the Baths, the Basilica of Constantine, or Hadrian's Tomb, had the thought of hubris in their dimensions occurred to me. I recognized in them the extent of Roman representational power. And if this "hubris" is interpreted in the sense of "sacrilegious arrogance," then I will freely admit that I am convinced of it myself.

The transformed spear, I continued, does not acknowledge how it now presents itself. It lacks the heart to feel the elation of these "pagan sheep," otherwise it would not be covering the harmony we could have experienced today with scorn and derision. And I thought I heard the voice of Adolf Hitler again when he said: Not for me, "I don't need that" — for my successors. In its greatness and at the same time in its limitation

that I then consider to be right. And this limitation can already be seen in the overview model, which does not correspond to Speer's design; it is reproduced on the following page of his "Memoirs." His description in the interview and in his "Memoirs" also does not correspond to the model. We read further in Playboy: "Hitler believed that as the centuries passed, his huge assembly hall would take on a great, venerable significance and become a holy shrine as important to National Socialism as St. Peter's in Rome is to Roman Catholicism. Such a cult was the root of the whole plan. He imagined his new capital as an eternal altar to his greatness and a means of perpetuating his worldview. Like the ancient pharaohs, he planned to ensure his immortality through the use of stone. Germania would not have been a city, but a sarcophagus."

And again I had to interrupt the epic flow of the interview statement, not because of Speer, but to refer once more to the model of Berlin's redesign shown in the picture: What a sovereign and convincing urban design based on the ideas of Adolf Hitler! The arrangement of the north-south axis is unique. All the proportions and scales of the square

and street spaces, the buildings themselves, from an urban planning perspective, could not be better. The intervals between the vertical and horizontal buildings are streamlined and full of tension, and the crowning glory is the dome hall with its central space, which has been sought after for centuries. Any possible criticism of details is secondary to this magnificent overall design, which does justice to the multi-million city without reaching or even exceeding the standards already set in the surrounding area. overall concept, which did justice to the city of several million inhabitants without reaching or even exceeding the standards set in the

17th century by the Great Elector for a city with 10,000 and later 40,000 inhabitants: the 60-meter-wide Unter den Linden avenue with its buildings and the large-scale palace designed by Schlüter in comparison to the small-scale parish buildings of the bourgeoisie.

The fascinating urban planning task was set by Adolf Hitler –

It was up to the commissioners and architects to decide whether and how they would fulfill this task, whether they would do justice to the commission. In contrast, and in complete contrast to the thinking of the time, Speer now sees it this way: Under his hands, it would not have become a city of Germania, but a sarcophagus! Here, too, I disagree and repeat: The overarching architectural idea of a traffic-friendly city design dominates, the rhythmic arrangement of the building masses is convincing and enduring. Even the execution of details that gave rise to criticism could not detract from the grand urban design concept. It is strange that I, his "Opponent in Munich"—that's how Speer described me—must defend his elaboration of Adolf Hitler's architectural ideas before Mr. Reeps.

That the 'Führer's palace' was to be twice as large as Nero's famous 'Golden House' – this idea alone, and the inflated plans that followed, correspond to Speer's gigantomania and not to any demand made by Hitler. I was well aware of Adolf Hitler's residential and representational needs, which he claimed for himself, as he had commissioned me to design his house, first for Munich and then, finally, for Linz. His personal demands were moderate, even modest. However, it was different when he thought about the architectural representation of the nation, including the "Führerpalace": "My successors will need it."

And then came another restriction: during our nightly conversations in the respective headquarters until 1945, he repeatedly emphasized the need to carefully review many of the plans made so far in order to arrive at a clear architectural gesture. He demanded a modern tectonics that would also do justice to construction in steel

and reinforced concrete. Strict simplicity was to be strived for in order to maintain dignity in the building in view of the sacrifices of the war. These sensible demands by Adolf Hitler corresponded to my principles in my work as his architect.

The triumphal arch and the large domed hall in Berlin are based on Adolf Hitler's design sketches and scale specifications from 1925. He often spoke to me about the dimensions of these buildings.

In Winniza, in memory of his trip through Paris at the end of June 1940, based on the impressions he had gained at that time of the Champs Elysées, the Etoile, and the Arc de Triomphe.

At that time, Adolf Hitler recalled: "We drove up the Champs Elysées from the large Place de la Concorde in the haze of the early summer morning. The view of the Arc de Triomphe was uniformly framed by the rows of trees lining the street, ... and even in this setting, which limited the street space, the 'Triumphal Arch' seemed too small to me. This is certainly true in winter, when the leafless trees reveal the view of the buildings lining the street. In today's age of automobiles, the Etoile is too small as a destination and as a traffic hub for twelve boulevards and streets; it is split and fragmented by them. And yet, the Etoile could not be any larger with the addition of the tree-lined front gardens, as this would be at the expense of the scale of the Arc de Triomphe.

In Berlin, the triumphal arch will arch over a crossroads, its dimensions and cubic mass corresponding to the proportions of the square and the wide streets. But above all, I always see the architectural idea behind the Great Arch: a memorial to the soldiers who gave their lives fighting for Germany, and a symbol of all the nation's struggles for its existence.

Based on this feeling, I sketched this arch and the gloriole beneath the high, massive, and heavy vault. This gloriole serves both as a contrast to the mass and to convey the scale.

With a diameter of 250 meters, the domed hall reflects the party's power of representation, but also the state of the art in 20th-century technology.

20th century.

For a superintendent, it would of course be too large. They showed their idea of how the Protestant Church should be represented in a building in Berlin Cathedral with its numbered seats.

While Speer adhered to Adolf Hitler's sketch from 1925 when designing the model of the triumphal "Great Arch" (he presented this model in 1939 on Adolf Hitler's 50th birthday), I went on to explain, he took complete liberty with the planning of the "Great Hall," the dome hall, and its representation in the model, he deviated completely from his client's early drawing, "much to the detriment of the design of this architectural concept. What I explained to my sons can be easily verified. In Hitler's drawing, the giant hall exudes serenity and dignity. The monolithic colossus, square at the base, is positioned in the elevation in accordance with the golden ratio and effortlessly supports the flat dome. The generously staggered tambour clearly grows out of the stone colossus, dissolving it, contrasting with it, mediating and allowing the flat-shelled dome to float. Even in the sketch, you can sense the steel in the dome shape and the spans of the ribs. This gives the giant the dimensions and tectonics of the 20th century.

Even the portico of the entrance hall, with its classical proportions, does not detract from the unity of the building. This portico is clearly a reminiscence of the dreamlike sketch: the entrance hall of the Roman Pantheon!

The overall shape of the "Great Hall" is familiar from this sketch, reminiscent of the architects Gilly and Schinkel. The building would certainly be gigantic, but by no means out of place in Berlin*.

The dimensions and scale of the hall according to Adolf Hitler's sketch depend on the size of the vestibule, which is roughly the same shape as that of the Roman Pantheon. The spirit of this portico pervades all the proportions, with the height of the columns determining the dimensions of the monolithic cube and thus the system of the façade.

Speer took a different approach. The stone cube is flattened and has to be supported by pillar towers. The broad dissolution of the wall surface by the vestibule seems to weaken the substructure. The tambour detaches itself completely from the load-bearing stone structure and adds to the dome, whose parabolic

The rising curve belies the steel construction: the dome no longer floats, it weighs heavily. Eighteen ribs of the dome appear in view, and in this tight row they become, to scale, the ribs of a metal-covered stone vault, a giant mountain range of green-patinated copper. Of this multitude of ribs, only nine would correspond to the tectonic-static spans of a steel structure as it was to be executed.

The tambour, in the sculptural form of Michelangelo's St. Peter's or in the calm unity of the Florentine Dorn, from which the dome swings down in each case, degenerates in the Speer model into powerless ornamentation. A flat row of consoles separates the main cornice from the substructure like a zipper.

Speer has robbed the giant of its uniqueness and dignity with small scales. An Etienne Boullée of the 18th century, a Friedrich Gilly or a Friedrich Schinkel of the 19th century would have mastered the architectural idea with the technology of our time.

Back to the Playboy interview. When asked, "Do you have any lingering regrets that these plans were never realized?" Speer replied:

I must admit that, despite their absurdity and madness, I still find it difficult to free myself completely from the power that these plans exerted over me for so many years. Intellectually, I can now despise them; but deep down, they still have a hold on me. Perhaps that is one reason, apart from everything else, why I hate Hitler so deeply: he not only made me capable of destroying my conscience, he also consumed and perverted the creative energies of my youth." But Speer is not finished with his answer to this playboy question.

boy question. He went on to say:

"But although these plans still hold an inner fascination for me, I am glad that they were never realized, because I can now see what I could not see then, that they were deeply immoral in their conception. Their proportions were alien, inhuman, reflecting the coldness and inhumanity of the Nazi system. 'I am building for eternity,' Hitler used to say to me, and that was true.

But he never built for people. The size and scale of his monuments were a prophetic symbol of his plans for world domination. And the gigantic metropolis he envisioned could only serve as the heart of a conquered and enslaved empire. One day in the summer of 1939, we were standing in front of the wooden models when Hitler pointed to the golden German eagle with the swastika in its talons, which crowned the top of the dome. "That must be changed," he said emphatically. Following his instructions, I altered the design so that the eagle now held a globe in its talons. Two months later, World War II broke out."

I interrupted the translation once again: "That Adolf Hitler aspired to a 'Germanic Reich' in a united Europe is undeniable, but it is not reprehensible. There is no doubt that Germany or the desired Germanic Reich would have become a world power. But to say that Adolf Hitler planned world domination or world supremacy is not only nonsense and insinuation, it is Speer's nonsense.

If Speer cites the eagle on the globe at the end of the "Great Hall" as proof of planned world domination, then that is just like me saying that the district president of Düsseldorf is claiming world domination because his office building is crowned by an eagle holding the globe in its talons. It is particularly suspicious and disturbing that the eagle and globe were recently reattached to the building and regilded in the process.

The fact that the lantern of the Berlin dome hall ends in a sphere with an eagle spreading its wings, and thus as an all-sided sculpture, is not only self-evident to every architect.

But not for Speer.

To illustrate Speer's tendentious efforts, I opened a model of the "Great Hall" that he included in his book "Memoirs": Like a gruesome nightmare, the gigantic dome hangs over the Brandenburg Gate and Wallot's Reichstag building. Frightening. It takes your breath away until you orient yourself by looking at the overview model on the next page of the book and realize how far apart the individual groups of buildings are from the "Great Hall," while in the two-page model, everything appears to be piled on top of each other. "How strangely the perspectives shift!" writes Speer, albeit in a different context, but quite aptly*.

The shortcomings of photographic technology lend themselves to such pictorial distortions. No wonder that the Zugspitze mountain is not also included in this panopticon to "wither away" in comparison to the dimensions of the parabolic dome! Speer eagerly criticizes his Berlin plans, saying that everything is not only crazy, but also boring, lifeless, and regimented. But where his gigantomania breaks through—and he cannot hide it in any of his statements—he transforms it into Hitlerian megalomania, whose influence, despite all its absurdity, he has been unable to escape. What Speer now has to offer is a macabre mixture of personal disappointment and

the know-it-all arrogance of someone who thinks he knows everything better, culminating in a self-portrayal in which he repeatedly emphasizes his moral integrity alongside his mea culpa.

This raises the question: What is this ambivalent phenomenon that

deliberately wants to build up an ethical principle, only to then say with vulgar triumph: Finally, I was able to get back at him. Yes, he also wants to get back at Adolf Hitler. But not the man he describes; rather, he moves in the shadow that this man cast.

I take two telling statements from Speer's Playboy interview:

Question: "Was there a lot of infighting among Hitler's entourage?" Speer:

"Hitler's circle was like a Byzantine court, seething with intrigue, jealousy, and betrayal. The Third Reich was less a monolithic state than a network of mutually hostile bureaucracies and Hitler's satraps, who staked out their own independent spheres of interest and then expanded them ruthlessly—often to the detriment of the national interest."

Some of that certainly applies to Speer; he was a master at carving out and expanding his spheres of interest!

Question: "Were Hitler's courtiers as corrupt as they were ambitious?" Speer: "Most of them would have made your American contemporary Al Capone look like a benevolent philanthropist. From the moment they seized power and got their hands on the state coffers, they lined their own pockets, amassed personal wealth, profited from government contracts, built large palaces and country estates with public funds, and indulged in a lavish lifestyle more befitting the Borgias than supposed revolutionaries. The rot permeated everything; like a fish, the Nazi government rotted from the head down."

When that was translated for me, I'd had enough and thought: The only decent thing in this Playboy magazine are the sleazy jokes and the naked girls. I looked at my sons, who had watched me reading and listening with both amusement and concern. I turned back to the first page of the interview and pointed to the three photos of Speer, which serve as a "subliminal" introduction—in their selection and facial expressions, they correspond to his statement—and said: "Look at this man! No, what a saint!"

The flight to Posen

I just angered Dönitz when I mentioned in the garden how Hitler sent his four-engine plane to Posen at the end of 1939 to pick up Christmas geese. Hitler's pilot, Baur, justified this by saying that the almost unused plane had to take off occasionally. The geese were intended for parcels that Hitler had sent to his acquaintances. A remarkable mixture of middle-class welfare and potentate behavior; for Dönitz

, however, it was incorrect. He was upset, but finally found a way out by "not believing the story."

The Grand Admiral did well, and he was absolutely right! If Speer takes the flight to Posen as an opportunity to accuse Adolf Hitler of "middle-class welfare" or "potentate mentality" for using the four-engine aircraft, then I feel obliged to describe the flight to Posen as I experienced it, and in accordance with the truth!

On the evening before the flight, we had a conversation in the Reich Chancellery about urban planning and architecture. At the end, Adolf Hitler spoke about theater buildings, architects, and builders, including Wilhelm II, who as a patron, had also supported the theater in Posen: I would be very interested to know what condition the city of Posen and the theater are in. Captain Baur can fly you both to Posen. I expect your report in the evening. Adolf Hitler said this to Speer and me.

The next morning, flight captain Baur and co-pilot Beetz, a Wehrmacht adjutant, Speer, and I were in the plane, and lo and behold, Kannenberg, the house administrator of the Reich Chancellery, was also a passenger.

We immediately became suspicious and wondered: Is Mr. Kannenberg planning to hoard supplies? But the only response was a gentle smile.

I had found Kannenberg, the rotund man with the broad, padded face of a gourmet, to be quite a versatile character: an extremely skilled restaurateur with quick, beady eyes, a joker, an actor, a solo entertainer... seemingly good-natured, as most well-fed people are, because he wasn't mean... but...! His exaggerated politeness concealed a certain dislike,

towards his personal adjutants Brückner and Schaub, as well as towards the respective skilled and attentive adjutants from the Leibstandarte. This was probably also due to the varied demands placed on everyone in the daily routine of the Reich Chancellery.

We made ourselves comfortable in the Führer's cabin, and I didn't pay any attention to what Speer discussed with flight captain Baur before the flight began.

We were flying very high, with clear visibility, when Speer stood up and said casually, "Now I'll take the controls and be the pilot." He disappeared into the cockpit. Baur appeared in the cabin: "Speer wants to fly."

"Well, let him show us what he can do!"

He showed what he could do—or rather, the co-pilot showed off his skills and what the plane was capable of. Until then, Kannenberg had just raised his eyebrows and looked at the captain with frightened, beady eyes, but now he started to scream as the plane rocked, spun, and plunged downward at full speed. Kannenberg was lifted out of his seat and floated in the air, his arms and legs flailing helplessly as if they weren't his own. The plane pulled up abruptly from its nosedive into a half loop before tipping over again on one wing. Kannenberg slammed into the floor and whimpered. Baur was hanging on to the handholds: "The spear can't do it!" I heard him say, then he shimmied back into the cockpit.

I kept my feet anchored under the chair, holding the straps in my hands, which I could no longer fasten. I now knew what was going on, and the grotesqueness made me want to laugh, but that quickly passed. I clenched my teeth so that my stomach wouldn't... But then, as the plane tilted, Kannenberg came toward me, then flew to the other side... What chaos! Finally, the plane was steady again, and I took care of Kannenberg with the adjutant. We laid him down and strapped him in. He was pale, with blue lips. Then Speer appeared, grinning like Rühmann's senior student Pfeiffer, and I pointed to Kannenberg
berg, and the grin disappeared. It was good that we landed in Posen soon after. Kannenberg was gasping for air. He was placed on a stretcher and wrapped in blankets, and a doctor took care of him.

If Kannenberg had flown with us to hoard supplies, or as a scout for Christmas geese, or to establish connections for this purpose—I consider this entirely possible, but nothing more—then it had all come to nothing, because he was completely finished! But I also cannot imagine that, as Speer writes, the Führer's plane was being used to fetch geese. There were interested eyes all around, and the plane alone was causing enough of a stir, not to mention Kannenberg on the stretcher. The only thing missing was someone saying, "Look, they're loading geese into the Führer's plane!"

Speer and I drove from the airport into the city to fulfill our task of getting an impression of Posen and taking a thorough look at the theater. We were on the road for about five hours. Aha! Then the Christmas geese could have been packed into the cargo hold of the plane during that time?

I wrote to the pilot, Hans Baur: "You must know exactly whether the piloted aircraft you flew was used to transport geese from Poznan." He replied immediately:

"Of course I remember the flight, flying you both to Posen, and also the story about Kannenberg, who was finished at the time. However, picking up geese for the Führer is something that this ... pulled out of thin air; it's an invention of Speer. That Kannenberg might have wanted to look for geese was in Kannenberg's interest, which is not even certain. I know nothing about it. The Führer had
, as we knew him. This is just another piece of work that suits Speer, to get one over on the Führer and us."

That is all I wish to quote from Flight Captain Hans Baur's letter about the flight to Posen.

Late in the evening, after I had described my impressions of Posen and the dilapidated theater, Adolf Hitler said to me: "Now tell me about the flight."

also about the flight itself. I am informed, but I would also like to hear from you. Mrs. Kannenberg complained to me that her husband is not in good health. So, how did that happen?

I told him my version of events, and I noticed that he couldn't quite hide a slight smile. When I mentioned in my report that Kannenberg was on a stretcher, wrapped in blankets and receiving medical attention, Adolf Hitler became serious. He said: "That could have ended badly... I must reprimand you strongly, I owe it to Mrs. Kannenberg, who is responsible for my household here. Please bear this in mind in future!

Finally, let me make it clear: there was no other "flight to Posen" with Hitler's "four-engine plane"!

Speer often had a Heidelberg joke or prank up his sleeve! It started with a "particularly good Havana" that he offered, which exploded when smoked; it continued with "sending someone out on April Fool's Day," then moved on to occasional "friendly reminders."

"friendly hints." That may all be acceptable, but sometimes it ended with nasty insinuations that bordered on malice. This includes the goose transport from Posen with the four-engine Führer plane, with which he aroused the displeasure of the Grand Admiral. This is part of Speer's "wealth of ideas and sincerity" that Zuckmayer breathless! As for Speer himself, he was arrogantly sensitive.

The ambivalent Speer

In his Spandau Diaries, Speer writes:

"At the moment, I am almost exclusively preoccupied with the Italian Renaissance. I still find it difficult to grasp the difference between antiquity, the Renaissance, European classicism, and my own aspirations, beyond general phrases."

This strange confession is followed by a polemical reflection on Adolf Hitler's sense of style, which is completely contrary to the impressions I have gained from Adolf Hitler's suggestions, conversations, decisions, and goals! Speer comes to the conclusion:

"But his (Hitler's) world was arcades, domes, curves, representation, never without an element of elegance, in short: the Baroque." And this after he writes:

"I no longer know why Hitler took the detour via Kloster Banz on this trip. The monks must have been quite astonished by the unexpected visit. Hitler was not impressed by the baroque pomp; it did not correspond to his architectural world. However, he admired the monumentality of the entire complex without reservation." 332

Speer's writings favor three of Adolf Hitler's city tours—to Paris, Augsburg, and Linz—to portray "Hitler's architectural world" and, at the same time, to belittle it with snide remarks and arbitrary insinuations, without any sense of how much such judgments must also undermine his own credibility.

Inaccurate, even in the confusion of the data, he describes Adolf Hitler's trip through Paris with two of his architects, whom he had entrusted with great tasks, and with the sculptor he admired. This city tour could not have been described by a spear at a lower level than with the concluding remark and the sculptor he admired. Even Speer could not have described this city tour in a more dismissive manner than with his concluding remark:

"The end point of our trip was the romantic, saccharine imitation of early medieval domed churches, the Sacré Coeur on Montmartre, a choice surprising even for Hitler's taste*."

To place Sacré-Cœur, which fits well into Utrillo's picturesque world, in "Hitler's architectural world" is not only an insinuation, it is a deliberate act of malice. For Speer knew very well that Sacré-Cœur was not the end of the trip through Paris; rather, Adolf Hitler wanted to have a bird's-eye view of the city from Montmartre. To have an overview of the city's dimensions, its breaks and intervals. The same discord is evident in Speer's views on Hitler and the planned buildings in Augsburg. He devotes a lot of space to this description. In doing so, he finds an opportunity to include the, as he writes, scheming Bormann in his account, and, subsequently, me as well. We read:

In Hermann Giesler, Hitler found an architect who understood his intentions perfectly and brought them to life. However, the first design for the Forum (Augsburg) was too similar to the planned Weimar project, which also designed by Giesler. When Hitler criticized this, Giesler gave the tower a baroque crown, and Hitler was thrilled."

So it was that simple! My designs for the Augsburg Forum never bore the slightest resemblance to the Weimar Forum under construction, but initially they did not correspond to Adolf Hitler's vision of the typical character of Augsburg's cityscape, which he also wanted to see reflected in the new part of the city, "a form appropriate to the times, developed from the architectural tradition." And the Augsburg tower underwent no changes whatsoever after my first design. Speer goes on to write: "The project was financed by postponing all residential construction." The project was not financed at all and was never built*.

Speer's account of his visits to Linz also requires explanation. Speer confuses the sequence of Adolf Hitler's two visits to Linz,

in late autumn 1940 and spring 1943. Once again, he disparages and manipulates. He must be aware that he cannot simply fabricate stories: "If he stood on the right, I stood on the left of Adolf Hitler, or vice versa!" He turns the bridge tour with the sculptures "Siegfried and Kriemhild" into a tirade.

Adolf Hitler advised me that when assessing these works, that they should be seen not as free sculptures but as decorative symbols serving the Brücke in keeping with its name. Perhaps, he added, the bases of the sculptures could be decorated with mosaics instead of reliefs to emphasize their decorative significance.

Speer then begins with the nonsense of Adolf Hitler's burial place "high above the city in the top floor of the tower," as he imagines in a pre-Raphaelite impulse, adding: "I believe it was on that afternoon that Hitler, under the influence of his own enthusiasm, first declared that his sarcophagus should one day be placed in the new landmark of Linz, the highest tower in Austria." Adolf Hitler never said anything of the sort, because ever since I was commissioned by him to design Linz in the fall of 1940, his instruction was: "The burial place of my parents is to be in a small crypt in the lower floor of the tower."

Nevertheless, Speer's Hitler tomb in the tower prompted Joachim Fest to attempt to document it: "He had envisioned his burial place in a massive crypt in the bell tower of the planned giant structure on the banks of the Danube near Linz."

And in the comments on this it says: "Personal communication from Speer. One of Hitler's other favorite architects, Hermann Giesler, occasionally denied that Hitler wanted to be buried in the bell tower of the planned building on the banks of the Danube near Linz; only Hitler's mother was to be buried there. However, Speer definitely remembers Hitler saying that he wanted to be buried in Linz at this very spot*."

This "enormous crypt in the bell tower" was, in my plans, an octagonal room with a diameter of four meters and a height of about five meters, including the vault. And this vaulted room was to become the burial place of Adolf Hitler's parents.

So there is nothing to it, even if Fest refers to the fabulist Speer. But is that really so important? As far as the burial place itself is concerned, not particularly; but it is important in the context in which Adolf Hitler saw his burial place, in its connection with the Party Hall in Munich. This fascinating connection was the basis of my designs and model experiments since the fall of 1940 and the subject of many conversations, even after this city tour in the spring of 1943.

Speer then describes his visit to the Linz steelworks, now known

the name VOEST, a plant of international importance, and in a few sentences he again conveys something of the "architectural world of Hitler":

"As we left the large steel hall, Hitler once again expressed his appreciation for modern architecture made of steel and glass: 'Look at this front, over three hundred meters long. How beautiful the proportions are! The conditions here are different from those of a party forum. There, our Doric style is an expression of the new order, but here, the technical solution is the appropriate one. But if one of these supposedly modern architects comes to me and wants to build housing estates or town halls in factory style, then I say: he has understood nothing. That is not modern, it is tasteless and, moreover, violates the eternal laws of architecture. The workplace needs light, air, and practicality.

I demand dignity from a town hall and security from a residential building, which equips me for the harshness of life's struggles. Just imagine, Speer, a Christmas tree in front of a glass wall! Impossible! As everywhere else, we must also take the diversity of life into account here!" In this summary, Speer described what Adolf Hitler said about diversity and the resulting differentiation in the design of buildings. However, Hitler's comments read woodenly and fragmented in Speer's report; they have lost the color and nuance that characterized his explanations. His thoughts on the necessary "sense of security" in a home, on the design of a housing estate, on the rationality of a glass wall, which is conditioned by the harsh, sober world of work, in comparison to the emotional world – he also mentions the magic of a Christmas tree – all this is presented by Speer with almost no context.

Adolf Hitler's comments corresponded to the course of the visits in the respective local areas. He talked to me, the person in charge of Linz, on the train about traffic issues, the modern, technical railway station, and the integration of the broad-gauge railway. Then, in the city area, about the connection of the city's developments to the highway, the continuation of Linzer Landstraße, known for its town houses and baroque churches, to the new Laubenstraße with its underground tramway. We stood by the Danube: Giesler will tame the river, and then one will be able to say with good reason: 'Linz on the Danube'. He named the buildings that would one day be erected in this beautiful cityscape.

I took in what Adolf Hitler said and was completely fascinated by his description.

Speer, on the other hand, felt differently, writing:

And although Hitler developed his plans with a serious, almost solemn expression, I didn't really feel that it was an adult speaking. For a split second, it seemed to me that this was all a grandiose game with building blocks.

But why was Speer so eager to play with these building blocks, why could he never get over the fact that it was me, of all people, who was assigned to Linz, even though I had never wanted it?

The journey through old Linz took us to the housing estates and buildings for the workers of the new factory complexes. Adolf Hitler was shown the various floor plans of the apartments, inquired about the technical facilities, and talked to the construction workers and foremen.

The gently sloping hills here in the west and north of the city are ideal for residential areas. Make sure there are good transport links to the city center and that green spaces are included.

This was another clue for me before he moved from his architectural world to the technical world of Linz, to the blast furnaces, steel foundries, and rolling mills, and then on to the halls of the Nibelungenwerk with its tank production, where tank officers and weapons engineers were waiting for him. Between discussions on weapons technology, Adolf Hitler turned to me, his architect: "Make sure that the planned granite bridge on the eastern outskirts of Linz can withstand the highest loads," he said, pointing to the tank colossi.

It is necessary to overturn Speer's credo, which states: "I placed overall planning alongside representative buildings; Hitler did not. His passion for buildings of eternity left him completely uninterested in transport structures, residential areas, and green spaces: he was indifferent to the social dimension."

Adolf Hitler was already concerned with transportation problems in the Landsberg Fortress and drew the profiles of the autobahns. Inspired by his experiences in Vienna and Munich and by studying city plans

of major cities, especially Paris, he developed his own urban planning ideas, which were powerful and modern. With the promotion of motorization, he simultaneously reorganized the German road system and dealt extensively with the parking problems of stationary traffic.

He commissioned Dr. Todt with the planning and construction of the motorways and created the office of "General Inspector for German Road Traffic," a unique event in the history of the state. But in addition to individual transport, he saw the great importance of mass transportation: In cities, he envisioned underground trams, subways, and commuter railways; outside cities, he advocated the construction of new, intersection-free standard-gauge railways with the goal of increasing speeds so that, as he later said, rising individual traffic would be able to be handled by rapid transit systems, thereby relieving congestion on the roads.

He saw the European broad-gauge railway as the crowning glory of rail transport. He called for solutions for rail freight operations, which were

party buildings on the east-west axis in Munich.

Above: View of the DAF building, exhibition halls in the foreground.

Below: The "reception" in the west by the SA forum:

The party's buildings on the east-west axis are being discussed. (Hitler, M. Bormann, Giesler.)

Adolf Hitler in Linz: "Giesler will give the river its banks, then one will be able to say with good reason, 'Linz on the Danube!'" (Giesler, Speer, Hitler, Prof. Roderich Fick.)

Giesler: "I took what Adolf Hitler said to heart!" Speer, on the other hand, felt that it was "as if it were all a grandiose game with building blocks," as he wrote 30 years later.

Today, this is referred to as container transport. His interest in aviation and air travel is well known to everyone who lived at the time and is indisputable.

Adolf Hitler took a special interest in the planning of residential areas, as I experienced particularly in Munich's Südstadt district. He expected detailed information about the plans for green spaces. Adolf Hitler was the founder of a new social dimension in housing construction. The discussions, which often lasted for hours, later at night in headquarters while he waited for reports from the front, led to guidelines for family-friendly housing units, down to the last detail.

He saw these residential units—even more than Speer or us architects in general, including the responsible urban planners—in their context and harmony as a whole, taking into account the workplace, transportation, utilities, social facilities, schools, green spaces, sports and swimming facilities, and, of course, the community buildings that would represent these residential communities.

Speer was aware of all this, and yet he dared to make his absurd claims for the sake of the desired trend! On closer inspection, Speer's credo proves to be a collage, a slanderous patchwork of insinuations, untruths, distortions, and malice directed against himself.

Back to that "day in Linz." From the world of weapons technology, powerful tanks, and their military assessment, about which Speer finds some almost derisive sentences in his

Spandau Diaries, we drove into the silence of St. Florian Abbey and thus into another world that was Adolf Hitler's own. There were discussions about securing cultural assets, then we listened to an organ concert with works by Bruckner in the abbey church.

At the end of the tour of Linz, Speer noted in his Spandau Diaries: "When we returned to the special train, he (Hitler) was brought back to reality with a jolt after these architectural fantasies, musical dreams, and visions of battle. An adjutant reported the heaviest attack on Paris to date. It had been carried out in broad daylight under heavy fighter cover, and the German air defense had been virtually powerless to stop it*."

When Adolf Hitler read this report, I was sitting opposite him in the special train. I noticed no emotion in him—why should I? He had behaved chivalrously in the campaign against France and spared Paris. Should the German air defense, tied down on many battlefields, do more than it was capable of and protect Paris from its "friends"? After the cold-hearted destruction of the French fleet in the port of Oran by their English brothers in arms, one would assume that the bombing

of Paris would have moved Charles de Gaulle more than Adolf Hitler, but hardly more than Speer, for otherwise he would not have concluded the Linzer Tag with this revealing remark.

But the day was not over yet. When we arrived at the Berghof, Adolf Hitler was awaiting the military "situation" and demanded his attention and decisions until late into the night. While I was able to rest, tired and exhausted, I thought about how multifaceted the world was that Adolf Hitler had to deal with day after day.

The contradictions in Speer's statements are excesses of a method that exposes its own motives. Speer writes about his designs:

"The Führer's palace I designed was a variation on Pompeian ideas of two-story columned halls with Empire-style additions in gold and bronze; at the same time, I designed a Reich Marshal's Office for Göring, I had in mind the structure of the Florentine Palazzo Pitti, with extravagant Baroque staircases inside. ...

But when I think about it today, I didn't succeed in my intention: monotony and emptiness prevailed despite some good details. An unintentional emptiness of expression. Nothing in Hitler's and my Berlin had anything to do with the austerity and lack of ornamentation of Prussian classicism, which lived solely from its proportions. When I think about it, it took me far away from my beginnings and ideals."

Although this overall assessment invites comment, I will limit myself to the last sentence, which I did not want to take out of context and which I compare to another passage in his Spandau Diaries. For shortly afterwards, after evaluating the architects Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Tessenow, Speer writes: "Hitler did not dissuade me from myself." For he saw in Hitler: "... above all else, the preserver of the world of the nineteenth century against that disturbing metropolitan world that I feared for all of our futures. Seen in this light, I must have been waiting for Hitler. In addition, and this justifies him even more, he gave me a strength that carried me far beyond the limits of my abilities. So the opposite would be true: it was through him that I found a heightened sense of identity."

What ambivalence is evident here in thesis and antithesis, and how much does Speer misjudge the nature of Adolf Hitler, how much does he misinterpret this historical phenomenon? For Adolf Hitler believed that he could free the nation from the tensions, encrustations, and rudiments of the past nineteenth century and lead it to a new form.

Speer's reactions to his conviction in Nuremberg are also ambivalent and confusing. In his Spandau Diaries, he writes:

"Even towards the end of the war, I considered it absurd that I
, as Minister of Armaments, could be among those accused in the trials announced by the Allies

! At that time, during the many hours of idleness, I had stacks of files brought to me: Führer protocols, letters, or decisions of the Central Planning Office, which I leafed through in no particular order, mostly lying on my bed, to find passages that might incriminate me. It was probably my blindness of perspective that prevented me from reading out the elements of my guilt from these mountains of paper; otherwise, I saw the interests of my country as a nation at war, and these interests acquitted me, in accordance with all traditions." And it goes on to say:

On the contrary, I calmly ordered that my files be kept in a safe place and, a few weeks later, shortly before my arrest, I had them handed over to the Americans as study material. During the trial, the prosecution used parts of them to convict me of crimes against humanity." The English historian Geoffrey Barraclough writes:

"In Dr. Milward's book, there is an amusing, sardonic passage in which he describes how Speer appeared at the reception center for important prisoners in 1945 with a briefcase bursting with documents. He had 'an amazing story to tell, but who should he tell it to?'

"Those of us," Barraclough continues, "who were involved in such things at the time know only too well that he told it to everyone and anyone. Speer's interrogations poured out of the duplicating machine, were greedily and uncritically devoured, and for some time formed a major source for the history of wartime Germany. Speer was obviously eager to have his version put on record."

"On at least 60 different occasions between January and May 1945, Speer told his interrogators that he had committed acts of high treason and had even made plans, which, of course, proved technically unfeasible, to assassinate Hitler in his bunker."

"These were the stories that saved Speer's head in 1946, and with which he is now once again strutting around," Barraclough wrote spitefully.

In his Spandau Diaries, Speer describes how the court psychologist Dr. Gilbert visited him in his cell after the verdict was announced and asked him how he felt about the judge's decision. Speer replied:

"Twenty years! Well, as things stand, they couldn't have given me a lighter sentence. I can't complain. Nor do I want to." But a page later, he begins to struggle with his fate: "Wouldn't I have deserved a lighter sentence if Schacht and Papen had been released?"

I just assured Gilbert that the opposite was true. I envy them! So lies, concealment, and insincere statements have paid off after all." And he continues, with a reference to Hitler:

"I didn't help him into power, I didn't finance his rearmament. My dreams were always about buildings, I didn't want power, I wanted to be a second Schinkel!"

Almighty! That's no small thing! Speer writes a lot about Gilly, Schinkel, the Doric and Prussian styles, but his designs for the

The staircase of the Reichsmarschallamt and the façade of the Führerpalast prove him wrong. But he continues:

"Why did I insist so stubbornly on my guilt? Sometimes I suspect it may have been vanity and grandstanding. Of course, I know in my heart that I was guilty. But should I have acted so pompously in court? In this world, it is better to get by with flexibility and cunning. On the other hand, can Papen's cunning be a model for me? If I envy him, I also despise him. But I was forty when I was arrested. I will be sixty-one when I leave prison."

When it comes to agility, cunning, and shrewdness, Speer's naivety is almost touching—for those who don't know him. Compared to him, Papen was a mere boy.

Speer saved his head, but he earned himself twenty merciless years in prison.

Twenty years in prison—I doubt I could have survived that. And Speer certainly did not believe that he would serve the full 20 years—except for the last few—because events such as the Berlin Blockade and the Korean War gave rise to hopes of change.

Without a doubt, Speer did not anticipate the malicious relentlessness of those who were responsible for, consciously and firmly stood behind the verdict and its execution, and—God help us—still stand behind it today. Speer counted on the success of his daughter Hilde's efforts and the promised pro forma support of Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle, Heinrich Lübke, Willy Brandt, Carlo Schmidt, Herbert Wehner, and Niemöller, recipient of the Order of Lenin. He hoped! Even if he writes in his diary of the "fourteenth year": "Hopeful report from Hilde in the evening. But these are her hopes. Not mine." They were also his hopes.

The dispute

"Powerful and yet uninterested in power," is how American historian Professor Eugene Davidson, reviewing the book "Memoirs," describes the author Albert Speer on the back cover.

Speer, on the other hand, writes with modest restraint in his "Memoirs": "At first, I tried to get all construction plans for the Reich under my control through a decree from Hitler; but when this plan failed because of Bormann ..."

of the Reich under my control by means of a decree; but when this intention failed because of Bormann ..."

It was late autumn 1940 and shortly after my surprise assignment to plan Linz on the Danube. The conversation was conducted as if between friends: Giesler, said Speer, would you agree if I expanded my area of responsibility and thus my jurisdiction? In future, I would like to devote more time than before to the Gaustädte, where urban development measures are pending or expected and which are usually also linked to the construction of party buildings. I consider my involvement necessary in order to avoid planning errors. And my intervention will certainly make the respective decisions easier for the Führer.

Of course I agreed... and a few months later, Speer reproached me for this in a presumptuous letter:

"During our penultimate meeting at Obersalzberg, I asked you whether you would agree to my ideas about expanding my area of responsibility, which I was reluctant to accept. At the time, you responded with a cheerful and decisive 'yes.'" And he concluded: "Your agreement was

was my most important prerequisite for taking further steps." Where to? Right, that's how it was, and nothing had changed, because Speer's activities shielded me from any further demands. I was overloaded with plans for Weimar, Augsburg, and Munich, and I felt compelled to delegate many tasks that I would have liked to keep in my own hands down to the last detail to my staff.

Now the task of "redesigning Linz" had been added. It was a commission that was presented to me not as an instruction but in the form of a personal request: "I know how busy you are, but you cannot refuse me this; you must grant my request—remember, it is my hometown!" Adolf Hitler said this to me.

In order to do justice to this unique task of shaping a city on the river, I felt compelled to delegate even more and to take advantage of every possible opportunity to lighten the load for the sake of planning.

This was also the line taken in the agreement—based on a proposal by Speer? The quotas for the "Munich redevelopment," mainly iron and steel, were to be directly represented by Speer at the Reich and administered by his office, the "Generalbauinspektor" (General Building Inspector).

This saved me many personal visits and trips to Berlin and my staff. Regardless of the peace task of the "Redesign of Munich" itself, this form of quota responsibility had existed since the beginning of the war, as Speer's initiative had led to the central management of an air force construction program from Berlin. I had to comply with this in the Bavaria and Danube regions, where Speer assigned me the quotas for these

industrial buildings for the production of weapons, ammunition, engines, and even aircraft were allocated to me by Speer.

After traveling through Paris three months earlier, on June 25, 1940, the day of the armistice, I had received instructions at the Bruly de P8che headquarters after talks with Adolf Hitler to begin construction work on the "rebuilding of Munich." In the same decree, the Reich authorities were requested to provide me with every assistance.

At the beginning of the work, the focus was on the Reichsbahn buildings in the greater Munich area. This project triggered a series of further construction measures, which also interlocked in terms of timing and complemented each other. Everything was carefully planned and matched up with the realities of the workers, materials, construction equipment, and iron and steel quotas needed.

After a period of preparatory construction work, the first requests for the allocated building materials, iron and steel, arrived. They were checked, forwarded to Speer's office, and submitted for approval. It may be that some requests were granted, albeit hesitantly. But then the quota allocations stopped, and all efforts, which were steadily increasing due to pressure from the construction sites, remained unsuccessful.

All direct negotiations conducted by my staff in Berlin were also fruitless and even discordant. I intervened and had a meeting with Dr. Todt. He was, as far as I was concerned, solely responsible for the quotas in the construction sector. The meeting made it clear that I had relinquished my direct responsibility for the quotas and the claim I had made on my own behalf, thereby placing myself in a position of dependence on Speer and his quota administration.

And not only that: all construction deadlines, dispositions, and procedures for the redesign measures became imponderable in this situation. The reputation of the department under my leadership was at stake. The complaints that

The complaints that were brought to the attention of the Reichsbahn New Construction Directorate and its construction sites, as well as to their ministry and to me, took on a more serious tone, and in some cases, work came to a standstill.

I held another frank discussion with Dr. Todt, but was unsuccessful in obtaining the urgently needed quotas. I then explained that only a neutral, objective allocation of quotas, determined by the Führer according to the respective urgency and priorities, could prevent a disaster like the one currently unfolding in Munich from happening again in the future. Only he, Dr. Todt, recognized by all, could guarantee the proper administration of all quotas in the construction sector, not Speer, whose office, consciously or unconsciously, would favor its own interests. However, as the conversation progressed, it became clear

that decisions had already been made regarding the allocation of quotas. Then there was the issue of the building stones, regardless of their type, whether shell limestone, marble, or Roman travertine from Tivoli, not to mention granite. They were contractually in Speer's hands. Wherever I turned in my search for durable building stone, I was blocked by "Speer's supply contracts." I could only switch to a few low-performance companies, even resorting to Tuscan travertine. Slowly, all we have left is concrete, because we have enough gravel, said the manager of my construction site, but then we don't have enough cement and construction iron.

As I pulled on the file folder containing all the details I had collected, including my colleagues' reports on ironic dismissals, a tactic became apparent. I could assume that it was part of a strategy, but I had no idea what the overall plan was. I was still far from linking Speer's contingent skirmishes, which were taking place in his department, directly to his plans to expand his area of responsibility and gain additional authority.

Nor did I think that if Speer were to concern himself more than before with the Gau cities and their buildings for the party, he might then extend his authority to the party buildings entrusted to me in Weimar, Augsburg, Munich, and Linz. These realizations came only later, after the dispute had broken out in all its intensity. The "noble competition" between the cities undergoing redevelopment, which Adolf Hitler had expected, had already lost its material basis. And the relief I had hoped for, which was supposed to help me with my planning tasks, had turned into a new burden, accompanied by annoyance, anger, and worry.

I thought of Adolf Hitler's words on Montmartre at the end of our trip through Paris: "Whatever may hinder you, place it all on Bormann's broad shoulders; he will stand by you."

I had ample opportunity to do so thanks to my construction sites on the Obersalzberg. So I placed my quota concerns on Bormann's broad shoulders, along with the missing tons of iron and steel needed to avert the collapse of the Reichsbahn construction sites in Munich.

Without a doubt, Bormann did not take it lightly. He arranged for rapid assistance and promised a prompt clarification by the Führer after further discussions with Dr. Todt and Speer. He asked me to write a memo about the situation on my construction sites caused by the unstable quota allocation.

It was an extensive memo, in which I pointed out the inextricable link between planning, construction scheduling, and deadlines in their

dependence on the quotas for all building materials, including labor. I saw the existing dissonance as limited solely to the current arbitrariness of the quota allocations and therefore requested that the administration and allocation of construction quotas be placed in the hands of Dr. Todt.

Bormann obviously saw this in a larger context. In any case, he asked me to exercise strict restraint. At first, I suspected a cover-up and was indignant that I was not being kept informed of all developments. But I soon realized that Bormann was trying to prevent an open dispute. Nevertheless, he broke out due to Speer's letter frenzy. Speer's objective towards the end of 1940 is evident in his draft of a "Führer decree." This decree was intended to secure him "discretionary power" over all construction plans in the Reich on an almost "megalomaniacal" scale. It remains incomprehensible that his uncontrolled lust for power prevailed over his otherwise cool, pragmatic way of thinking.

. Even in its early stages, this extravagance was doomed to failure. And so it came to pass that Speer, deeply hurt, withdrew the decree. He had realized that he would never have obtained Adolf Hitler's approval for his decree, and yet he blamed Bormann and "beat me up. He combined this with a masterful rancor that put him in the best and most expedient position and me in the worst. Here the true Speer showed himself in an admirable form. It is worth recording this*.

On November 26, 1940, Speer wrote to Bormann. He justified the "Führer decree" he was seeking and enclosed a draft setting out the basic

The basis for this decree was to be provided by the "Organizational Plan for a Representative of the Führer for Architecture and Urban Planning of the NSDAP." It stated that "the representative is directly subordinate to the Führer" and that "his responsibilities in urban planning matters extend beyond the responsibilities of the party."

Speer to Bormann: "I still have no ambition whatsoever to take on this task," and after referring to his previous duties and activities, he adds: "The task of redesigning the Reich capital, together with advising the Gauleiters on a wide variety of construction projects, already takes up more than half of my working capacity."

redesign of the Reich capital, together with advising the Gauleiters on a wide variety of construction projects, already takes up more than half of my working capacity."

This prompted me some time ago, during an open conversation, to ask the person who probably knew Speer best what he thought Speer had been doing with the other half. Had he been thinking about how he could kick me in the shin or trip me up? He laughed: "Not just you! It was his method of getting his opponents to dig their own graves. He would then always help those who had fallen into the trap back onto their feet and could become angry when he saw that overly zealous individuals were attacking the victim. A Cesare Borgia of the 20th century, only he was not as evil as the pope's son. And he did not resort to poison until 1945.

But now back to Speer's letter to Bormann: The Führer should decide whether he, Speer, should assume "central responsibility" for the design of the NSDAP's buildings—in which case, however, it would be his wish that

, in order to consolidate his position, the Führer himself issue a decree defining his powers and, in particular, those of his colleagues. A strange, curious

The letter concludes with a number of "ifs and buts":

"If the Führer should decide against my personal wish and refrain from appointing me, I would ask you to suggest at the same time that the Gauleiters be given primary responsibility for the artistic design of the party buildings, as I consider it dangerous for this task to be centralized in the hands of non-experts (such as those in the Reich Organization Leadership)."

This was indeed suspicious; at the very least, it was an unfounded remark. And just as Speer was writing or dictating this, he must have been aware of how much Adolf Hitler disapproved of "central responsibility" and "central control" for all artistic design, as evidenced by the almost federal structure of the Reich, with its traditionally grown and regionally connected districts.

The "Chronicle of the General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital" from 1941 aptly reports on Speer's withdrawal of the decree, Adolf Hitler's opinion, and a further letter from Speer to Bormann, in which the dispute becomes apparent:

"Mr. Speer made the following note about a discussion with the Führer: 'On January 17 of this year, I reported the following to the Führer: During my illness, I had doubts about the appropriateness of defining my general tasks. I would consider it wrong to take on too much responsibility for general construction issues and the party's individual buildings. I pointed out that this work had unfortunately placed an extraordinary burden on me in the past.

In my opinion, it would therefore be better for the artistic work entrusted to me if I could withdraw from these tasks to a large extent. I would then be able to devote myself exclusively to my actual life's work, the construction of the buildings in Berlin and Nuremberg.

The Führer agreed clearly and enthusiastically. He felt that that it would be a shame if I got too caught up in these general matters. However, he believed that I would not be able to avoid giving advice from time to time. At my request, he stated that it was entirely up to me when and to what extent I would give advice. He also agreed to my request that, in the event of plans being presented to him by other parties, even if the person responsible referred to me, the responsibility would always lie entirely with the person who had presented the plans to him.

This decision has the following background.

It had long been necessary for all urban planning and construction projects of the party to be supervised by one man and represented to the Führer. Reichsleiter Bormann, who initiated the move, asked Mr. Speer to accept this office. In cooperation with the Reich Leader and the Reich Chancellery, Mr. Speer drafted a Führer decree and discussed it thoroughly.

Before presenting it to the Führer, he had, without Speer's knowledge, requested the opinions of Dr. Todt and Giesler. While Dr. Todt agreed in principle, Giesler rejected the decree on fundamental points without first discussing it with Mr. Speer in the old friendly manner, as had been customary up to that point.

Since Reich Leader Bormann also agreed with Giesler on essential points, no agreement could be reached.

On January 20, Mr. Speer informed Reichsleiter Bormann, as head of the Party Chancellery, of his decision to

1. was withdrawing his request for a decree appointing a "Commissioner for Urban Planning and Architecture in the NSDAP" and
2. waive further consideration of a decree on a "commissioner for urban planning,"
3. and would no longer use the title "Commissioner for Construction in the NSDAP" in the future, as it did not correspond to his duties as they were now defined.

Mr. Speer justified this decision, which had been on his mind for a long time, with Professor Giesler's negative opinion on the aforementioned decrees.

He further announced that he would be relinquishing those areas of work for the coming weeks that he was not personally assigned to by the Führer or that he did not enjoy doing.

The letter to Reichsleiter Bormann concludes:

"These measures will give me free time, and I will ask the Führer to assign me the additional task of developing a city. You will agree that I can give the Führer more pleasure by building a new city such as Drontheim, and that I will leave a visible sign of my work for posterity."

At the same time, Mr. Speer informed Reich Minister Dr. Lammers that he was withdrawing his request for consideration of the decree on the "Commissioner for Urban Development." However, he made this conditional on the areas of urban development and general building law remaining with the Reich Minister of Labor and not falling under the authority of the Reich Housing Commissioner, as intended.

On January 23, Mr. Speer issued the following note:

"At my request, the Führer has decided that the planning of the new city to be built near Dront

home, with a population of around 250,000, be designed and carried out by me as General Building Inspector. He added on his own initiative that it was also right for the entire construction management, carried out by my Berlin office, to remain in my hands."

Reich Minister Dr. Todt, who, like Professor Giesler, had been asked by Reich Leader Bormann to comment on the draft decrees that had been decided in favor of Mr. Speer during the meeting with the Führer on

January 17, he wrote to Mr. Speer on January 24 regarding the "Giesler case," expressing his wish that the

"good relationship of cooperation based on sincere respect and camaraderie" between Speer and him be maintained as before.

The following weekend, Mr. Speer and Dr. Todt met at Hintersee for a discussion*."

So much for the "chronicle." As far as I am concerned, however, some things are seen very one-sidedly: In my responsibility for my construction sites and for the deployment of the workforce, I was justified in opposing the reduction of the promised quotas. Yes, I even took the liberty of discussing this with Dr. Todt and Bormann.

My position was that Speer was welcome to expand, but not at the expense of the construction projects entrusted to me and my urban planning responsibilities. If he believed at the time that he could pull the wool over my eyes, he was mistaken. My resistance was directed against his one-sided and arbitrary control of the quotas.

I have Speer's draft of the desired Führer decree in front of me; like so much else, it is part of my files:

Under "Amt VI" it says "Main Department for Approval and Quota Allocation," and under point b it is stated succinctly: "Quota allocation for all cities undergoing redevelopment, as after consultation with Dr. Todt, these quotas are to be managed by me!"

But there is much more, because if you have discretionary power, you might as well use it thoroughly!

Under II, "Office for Urban Development," with four subheadings, 45 Reich or Gau cities are provisionally listed, plus six more city developments in Norway with the new city of Drontlicim

45 Reich or Gaustädte (Reich cities or district cities) are listed, along with six additional city developments in Norway, including the new city of Drontlicim.

Under Office III – Building Design, with seven subheadings or special areas, there was the "Artistic Design of Gau and District Forums," the "Artistic Design of Community Facilities of Local Groups," the "Design of Buildings of the Subdivisions and Affiliated Associations of the NSDAP (DAF, NSV, etc.)," and the "Design of Buildings of the Reich and Gau Administrative Offices."

of the buildings of the subdivisions and affiliated associations of the NSDAP (DAF, NSV, etc.)".

That would have meant submission for my planning contracts, and then I would have had to object just as I had to the quota system that was already in place.

Speer's letter of January 20, 1941, to Bormann is not reproduced in full in the "Chronicle"; the passages in which Speer attacks me are missing:

"I (Speer) would never have thought that party member Giesler would oppose my decrees so vehemently and thus trigger my final decision.

A friend who, moreover, could be indebted to me should not act in this way, because:

1. He saw the decrees before you did in Berlin, without commenting on them . . ."

What is this? Speer had my approval for what he had explained to me; as a friend, he would have told me that his goal had changed and was now focused on "discretionary power." When he showed me the decrees at the time, the "fine print on the back" had not yet been formulated and made a condition on the front. At that time, I still considered Speer a friend bound to me by our great common task.

Under point 4 of my list of sins, it is then stated that I should not have attempted to influence party comrade Dr. Todt in a way that was "negative" for Speer.

"You must understand," he complained to Bormann, "that a lot came crashing down for me when I saw that I had lost my unlimited trust in party member Giesler's friendship.

Since your (Bormann's) reservations were not very different from those of Professor Giesler, I decided during our meeting to leave this area of responsibility for good.

Soon afterwards, I was able to inform the Führer of my position in general terms and was happy that he understood and approved of my reservations. I am now certain that he had always been opposed to my activities in all these areas, as he was obviously pleased with my decision."

Speer's final sentence in his letter to Bormann reads:

"I know that after the difficult work of the next few weeks, I will be extremely happy with my decision, which was difficult enough for me to make."

Speer now saw me as a disloyal, ungrateful friend who had turned sharply against his decrees, and he wrote me an insulting letter.

Now I became angry, at everyone and everything, at the madman seeking power and prestige, I became angry at Bormann and at myself for not having acted earlier, as was my nature. I did so now, I asked to be relieved of my duties.

Just as Speer, in his anger, threw away everything the party had entrusted to him

entrusted to him, so did I. In a conversation with Bormann, I said spontaneously: Instead of support with the not exactly easy tasks, I get beatings and hostility? Do the job without me? I didn't push myself to Munich and Linz? I'm going to the soldiers!

That was very ugly of me, and I often thought back on it later. The grim Hagen with the Westphalian stubbornness, said Bormann. The Führer has decided: 'Giesler must fulfill his duties!'

If it was even possible for us—Speer and Giesler—to influence Adolf Hitler If we caused annoyance with our silliness, it was during the most tense period, when the decision about Barbarossa was being made. Dr. Todt and Bormann were asked to mediate between Speer and me, but the quarreling parties stubbornly insisted on their positions. They avoided each other, and when they did meet, they looked past each other.

Some of the trust he had placed in his former "friend" must still have remained. Because when I think back on everything, Speer could not have forgotten his more than open declaration of war on the Munich reorganization, which was only temporarily limited with his "Giesler in Munich? I will tolerate that now."

The deep disappointment over the decision not to issue the decree led the "Brotherhood of the Spear" in the "Klosterhof der Selbstbeschränkung" (Closet of Self-Restraint) to create a caricature: Speer rests on a cloud-covered pillar after his misguided efforts. While Brother Stephan, the city planner, sings the cantata Miserere "Nur Berlin" (Only Berlin), Schelke, the brother who planned the green spaces, pours the tulips Berlin and Nuremberg and the still small tulip Drontheim. In the foreground lies the chronicler Wolters, the personification of continuity, full of understanding for all events, distinguished with the rarely encountered "semper idem." The confratres and confessors Heftlage and Brugmann have already retired to their southeast-southwest cells for meditation.

That was probably the end of Hitler's desired decree, with which Speer wanted to bring all construction plans for the Reich under his control, but the struggle for quotas, for construction iron and steel, continued, as did the struggle for building stones.

The chronicle for 1941 notes under April 18:

After dinner together, the Reich Marshal looked over the plans of the Reich Marshal's Office from 11 p.m. until 2 a.m., which impressed him greatly.

... He (Göring) also signed the following letter to Dr. Todt:

"For the reconstruction projects ordered by the Führer for the General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital (immediate program of the General Building Inspector), the restrictions on the use of labor ordered in my decree of February 18, 1941, are not to be applied. I request that the implementation measures be determined with Professor Speer.""

The chronicle then notes:

"The Reich Marshal confirmed the monthly supply of 7,000 tons of construction steel requested by Mr. Speer for the emergency program as binding."

Now to the building stones; according to the chronicle of 1941, the

"stone decree" was dated June 22. After that, Speer's General Construction Administration received notification from the Reich Minister of Economics that the "obligation to report orders

for quarries had come into force: The matter is being handled by the GB-Bau (General Building Authority) in the hands of Prof. Brugmann. This means that of influence over all stone allocations by the GB-Bau or the General Building Inspector is now possible," it states succinctly*. Professor Brugmann was an employee of Speer.

Indeed, the chronicle is informative and a treasure trove. According to it, Alfred Rosenberg offered Speer on November 24, 1941, to take over urban planning in the eastern territories. Something similar is also noted in Speer's

"Memoirs."

But Speer ultimately rejected Rosenberg's offer at the end of January 1942:

"Because I feared," he writes in his "Memoirs," "that a central authority for urban planning would inevitably lead to the uniformity of cities."

This statement only becomes meaningful when compared with the draft of the desired "Hitler Decree" and with the letter he wrote to Bormann.

The 1941 chronicle makes no mention of Speer's decision in January 1942. But Speer must have seriously considered accepting this commission, because the 1941 chronicle states:

"Eight days later (after November 24, 1941), Mr. Speer had a meeting with Dr. Todt, in which he informed him that Gauleiter Meyer had approached him a few days earlier about taking over urban planning in the East. In the event of an assignment by the Führer, there must be agreement between them, Speer and Todt, that the division of labor would be carried out in such a way that the Todt authority would be responsible for the entire

He stated that Schultze-Fielitz was responsible for the construction work, while he himself would take charge of the construction planning. In this case, it made no sense to entrust two authorities with the construction work. He also informed Dr.

Todt that Schultze-Fielitz and he were in complete agreement on this issue.

Furthermore, he wanted the term "urban planning" to cover not only general planning but also the individual planning of buildings, so that the artistic unity of the cities would be guaranteed. Dr. Todt agreed to this division of labor, which was envisaged under certain circumstances*."

The chronicle records another peculiarity of a very special kind:

"On the evening of April 19 (1941), Mr. Speer returned to the Führer's headquarters, where he congratulated the Führer on his birthday in the presence of his personal entourage

at midnight. The next morning, A. (Albert) Bormann presented a document with the following wording:

"My Führer!

On your 52nd birthday, the undersigned artists of the Berlin Neugestaltung (Berlin Redesign) ask you, my Führer, to allow them to participate in the noble competition for the reconstruction of the city of Linz on the Danube.

Speer Distel

Schmidt

Dierksmeier

Breker

Hetzelt Kreis

Hentrich

Kaspar Stich

Thorak Tam

ms

Brugmann

Klajе Ortner

Pinnau

Dustmann."

When I read this after many years, I was shocked: So that was the reason for Adolf Hitler's remark at the Führer's headquarters in Winniza in 1942, when he said to me: 'In future, you will choose the architects you want to work with in Linz'. The others in his inner circle who knew about this strange birthday address probably didn't think anything of it? I can understand why Bormann didn't want to be mentioned in

He didn't want to fan the flames; rather, he was trying the whole time to smooth things over between Speer and me.

But that's how it was back then. Speer spared no effort when it came to pleasing the Führer. Or was it boundless and wounded ambition that spurred him on, now as manager, coach, and player, to lead his national team of architects, sculptors, and painters, all of whom he had signed up for Berlin, onto the site of the Linz redevelopment project

Why? To drive me, the lonely man whom Adolf Hitler had entrusted with the planning of his hometown and his retirement home, out of the "noble competition"?

Before Adolf Hitler made his decision about my planning commission for Linz, which Speer witnessed with a closed expression on his face that I found incomprehensible at the time, Speer's special offer would have been nothing more than strange. Regardless, I still find it extremely distasteful to present this offer as a birthday present.

In doing so, Speer crossed the line that

he had set for himself after his conversation with Adolf Hitler on January 19, 1941, and of which he informed Bormann in his letter of January 20, 1941:

"I am solely responsible to the Führer for all my buildings in Berlin and Nuremberg. Only this work can represent my life's work in the distant future. It is my greatest joy, but at the same time it is my duty to focus all my energy on it and not allow myself to be distracted by other tasks."

Discussions on the working model of the Dotauukkr development: Everyone is pointing at the high-rise building. Considerations? (From left: Eigruber, Hitler, Giesler, Ganzenmüller, and Fick.)

Planning for Linz: Bormann is always present, often accompanied by Linz Gauleiter Hgruber.

Adolf Hitler's construction ideas take shape.

The overview model of the Danube bank development. View upstream. On the right is the Urfahr side. At the top center: Hitler's planned retirement home.

Speer knew that in Linz I was fulfilling a personal request from Adolf Hitler. Otherwise, I would have resisted this assignment, just as I had previously decided of my own free will not to get involved in the controversial redevelopment of Munich. Speer should have taken this into account.

At the turn of the year 1941/42, Bormann wrote to Speer, mentioning his "heartfelt wish for 1942": reconciliation. Speer replied with an informative letter dated January 2, 1942, which Bormann interpreted at the time as the first sign of a possible reconciliation. "You must make up again, I will do everything I can," I often heard Bormann say at that time. Of course, because Adolf Hitler had instructed him to mediate between Speer and me.

Speer and me.

For me, the content of Speer's letter had a different meaning. It was followed by a value judgment:

Even though I strive to ensure that my buildings cannot and will not be surpassed by anyone else in terms of their artistic quality, and even though I assume that this will never be the case (after all, this is my life's goal!), I am well aware that Professor Giesler feels the same way about his buildings.

; for he would give himself up if he did not strive for the same thing, but assumed something else of his works." What could I say to such a view of the architectural profession?

It struck me as exaggerated even then, and it still does today. But anyone who knows Speer knows that it is in keeping with his nature*.

The letter also indicated that Speer was prepared to resume relations with me "as is customary among colleagues."

"I would like to make it easier for my party colleague Professor Giesler to take such a step by withdrawing my previous assertion that he took a stand against me 'deliberately and behind my back' in order to undermine me. I must maintain the accusations I made against Giesler at the time, as they have not been refuted. Incidentally, I am not interested in having them refuted in the future either."

On the morning of February 8, 1942, the plane crash tragically ended Dr. Todt's life. Speer succeeded Reich Minister Dr. Todt in all his offices.

Bormann soon informed me that Speer would now settle the score with me: He will suggest to you that you forget all the grief and nonsense, and you will agree to this most willingly... I beg you me!

On February 24, Speer asked me to come to Dr. Todt's residence for a discussion. Dr. Todt's residence for a discussion: "We are obliged to end the dispute; in doing so, we are complying with Dr. Todt's wishes.

The causes of the dispute were not discussed, so nothing was refuted and nothing was clarified. We had

Neither of us felt like it. The friendship was pragmatic; it ended on my part with Speer's statement before the IMT in Nuremberg, and finally with his remarks on the day of his release, September 30, 1966. And this "friendship" was buried under the jumble of his foolish statements and the evidence of his successful re-education in his statements, interviews, and books.

I have before me the notes on his letter to Bormann dated January 2, 1942, which ends with: "Hence my only New Year's wish for you: May you bring the Führer much joy and few disappointments in 1942 through your responsible work! In friendship and with warmest regards, Heil Hitler! Yours, Albert Speer."

And there in front of me is the Playboy interview with the question:

"What kind of man was Bormann?" Speer replied:

"He was the coarsest, most brutal, and most ruthless member of the Nazi hierarchy—and believe me, that's saying something. Personally, he was violent and primitive, without any culture or refinement. By nature, he was a henchman, but he was also a brutal guy and treated his subordinates like animals, with sadistic contempt for their feelings. He was either at your feet or at your throat, the worst kind of peasant with the worst kind of peasant cunning. He knew how to fool people into believing he was an insignificant and trustworthy helper of the 'Führer' while all the time cunningly building his own empire."

In stark contrast to this vulgar caricature that Speer paints of Bormann are the platitudes with which he concluded his letters to Bormann:

"And I kindly ask you to continue to give me your friendly support" and "In friendship and with warmest regards."

I discussed this with my friend Franz Alfred Six when he returned the Playboy with the Speer interview to me. I'll keep it short, he said. What Speer achieved with this manic statement is evidence of a contemptuous way of thinking. The interviewer then manipulated it into this vile piece of work.

And then he added: "I am a poor man, sick and without hope for my twilight years, but I wouldn't want to be in Speer's shoes for a million dollars."

A few years ago, I had a conversation with a trusted former colleague from the Weimar and Munich days. Of course, we also talked about Speer and his "memoirs." I had already said goodbye, and he accompanied me to the door when he said: "Mr. Giesler, you must admit that Speer was far superior to you!" "But of course he was," I said, and how!

On the train ride home, I had time to think about why

and in what ways Speer was so far superior to me. He was clever: when faced with the choice between becoming an architect or a mathematician, he chose architecture, because it allowed him to be a mathematician as well.

Mathematical and calculative thinking was the basis of all his actions. His aim was to have oversight for the sake of management. He had an unusual talent for organization, combined with a carefree attitude toward dealing with officials and handling official matters.

He saw construction in all its functions, in all its side effects, including the materials, the construction workers, the quotas, the iron and the stones... His agents secured him exclusive rights throughout Europe.

Transportation was important, of course: transport convoys, regiments even, and transport fleets, ships, and barges. He had a news service, press, propaganda, and film at his disposal.

He could have delegated all of this, he could have assigned much of it to independent contractors, but he wanted to handle everything himself, to have complete control. This required time and manpower. Speer had both, because Berlin, the capital of the Reich, and the buildings in Nuremberg required only half of it, as he told Bormann.

In this respect, too, Speer was superior to me, because whether it was Weimar, Munich, or Linz, every task demanded my full attention at the time, even during my hours of rest.

But the most important thing was almost overlooked: Speer also had a significant architectural firm with outstanding urban planners, architects, civil engineers, and landscape designers at his disposal, as well as freelance sculptors and painters.

Speer was an architecture manager—I was just an architect. Speer was powerful, but, as Davidson reports: "... at the same time uninterested in power!"

The saint of the columns

In 113, the Roman Senate erected a gigantic column in honor of the emperor and general Trajan. On the capital of the column stood a bronze, gilded statue of the honoree.

Art historian Bruhns writes: "Accustomed to grandeur and striving to surpass itself, Rome devised this new form of immortalizing triumph, which then convinced humanity of its expressive power no less than the older genre of triumphal arches, which now took a back seat in terms of rank. For just as the colossal column brought the concept of 'height' to its purest form, it was also particularly suited to paying homage to the highest authorities. Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius received similar columns in Rome, Arcadius received his in the new capital of Constantinople, and the emperor's son, the future Roman emperor, received his in the city of Rome.

, it was also particularly suited to paying homage to the highest authorities.

Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius received similar columns in Rome, Arcadius received his in the new capital of Constantinople; but when

Europe felt particularly close to Roman greatness in the age of Napoleon, it presented the new emperor with the Vendôme Column in Paris and his conqueror, Alexander of Russia, with a second one in St. Petersburg."

The emerging Christianity toppled the statues of ancient greatness and now paid homage to its confessors on mighty columns. After the final decline of ancient dignity in the fourth and fifth centuries, ascetic Christian hermits claimed the capitals of Roman columns as their place of residence, for the pleasure of God. The most famous among them was Symion Stylites of Aleppo. Stylites or pillar saints were the names given to these ascetics and penitents who nevertheless sought to raise their status through self-elevation.

To elevate oneself—who would deny this to the pillar saint standing between earth and heaven? Was he not predestined to rule over evil by virtue of his lofty position, from which he could see everything?

to judge and, if necessary, to mention the good things too? Everything that came down to earth from this lonely but triumphant height was significant, even insults and rebukes, even if some of them only reached the attentive after the event.

In Speer's "Spandau Diaries," I saw some caricatures drawn by his colleague Hans Stephan. They were created during the heyday of planning Berlin's redesign.

Speer writes:

"We were being ironic about our own gigantomania!"

This reminded me of Stephan's most ironic caricature. At first glance, it seemed ambiguous, but on closer inspection it was unambiguous: a huge column rises to gigantic heights through clouds of myrrh and incense, or even through clouds. Sacrificial smoke also envelops the statue in a Roman toga on the capital—a spear is visible, marking the highest-ranking figure.

At first glance, this was reminiscent of an ancient Caesarian honor. But on the stylobate of the three-step base of the column sits the chronicler in a Capuchin robe, eagerly trying to carefully note all the thoughts of the highest-ranking figure, all his confessions and views, but also all his insults, in order to pass them on to the interested world around him and to posterity.

This caricature was contemporary; and yet, with the monk at the foot

The column was also, as it now turned out, forward-looking. Stephan had depicted the imperial present and yet, with visionary intuition, pointed to "what is to come."

The monk on the stylobate allows no other interpretation. Did Stephan ever suspect how accurate his depiction would one day prove to be: Speer as a pillar saint?

At least he placed him a few column drums higher than the penitent, ascetic, and quarrelsome Symion Stylites of Aleppo. As an architect, Stephan had a sense of rank and appropriate scale.

After the publication of the Speer books, I met many people who believed that his strange transformation, his schizoid world of thoughts, his disfigurements and his lust for abuse, along with his embarrassing penitence, were the result of 20 years of "prison torture through isolation," as Sartre

. I disagreed: that's too much influence from the environment. It may be that his imprisonment sharpened his contours. In Speer's case, this "turnaround" is pure opportunism, cold and carefully calculated, in keeping with his genetic disposition, which he demonstrated even before his time in prison.

After the grotesque comedy before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, when Speer tried to tie the bear Tabun to the courtroom bar, "I had the intention of killing Hitler with poison gas, but . . ." he was

He was approached by Kranzbühler, the defense attorney for Grand Admiral Dönitz.

He asked Speer whether it would not have been safer and more effective to shoot Hitler than to carry out a poison gas operation that

an unknown number of secretaries, drivers, etc. would have been affected without necessarily reaching Hitler himself. Speer's answer was: "I couldn't shoot!"

The lawyer comments: "That was enough for me to characterize this personality, and his two books only reinforced my opinion at the time."

The experience and opinion of the upright lawyer and former naval judge serve to clarify: Had he known Stephan's caricature, he would have come to a different conclusion: "One does not expect a saint to be able to shoot. Poison, on the other hand, would be more likely for a stylite. But again, not for Speer, the second most powerful man in the Reich; he didn't just lack a ladder to carry out his plan at the air shaft of the command bunker of the Reich Chancellery.

One can imagine the "inner circle" of Speer's associates whispering lyrical plans in complete ignorance of the situation. That is the only explanation I can find for the exclamation of his colleague from the "Central Planning Office" in the winter of 1946, in which

Imprisonment, from cage to cage: nothing happens to Speer – he becomes the German Minister of Reconstruction! Without a doubt, Speer's willing admission of guilt, combined with his declaration of intent to assassinate Hitler, should have formed the basis of his defense. But it became nothing more than propaganda rhetoric from the

the first re-educators whom the Americans set upon the German people. It became a success for the crook "Dr. Gaston Oulman."

Beginning with the desperate charade of his statements before the military tribunal, Speer

military tribunal, Speer, as a prisoner, escalated into statements and secret messages, and then, after twenty years, as a free man, into unrestrained slander in his books and interviews, which did not even spare the victims of the victors' justice.

In order to justify himself to his children so that they would not have to be ashamed of him, and in order to "help the German people once again" through what he believed to be his sincere attitude, he felt compelled to deny the meaning of the sacrifices made by those who had fallen in the war, the fighters for Europe. It is certainly comforting for the bereaved to hear from Speer that their husbands, sons, and brothers sacrificed themselves, that their wives and children were bombed to death for a false ideal and for "utter madness." In doing so, Speer writes, he "served his own people best."

Then there is the infamy before the Nuremberg Tribunal: Speer allied himself with the American chief prosecutor Jackson! If there was ever any doubt about that, after thirty years Speer himself has now confirmed it in an arrogant manner: "When Jackson began the cross-examination, he smiled amiably." Incidentally, Speer continues, "I would have worked with anyone who supported my line of bringing the Germans back to their senses."

In his "Memoirs," in the "Spandau Diaries," and in his defamatory interviews, he attempted to manipulate the course of history and events. He wants to share in the confusion of the German people, even though this exposes him to suspicion of a lack of historical awareness and truthfulness.

And the horse apple found on the bed in his Spandau prison cell plunges him into a schizoid state. Speer associates it with the imperial orb, the symbol of power and dignity. The horse apple is then linked to the image of the eagle holding the globe in its talons*.

He discovers the "deeply criminal features in Hitler's face" and believes he must assume that part of Adolf Hitler's success was based on the audacity with which he pretended to be a great man*. That may suffice for the explanations.

Who doesn't remember? Speer was considered Hitler's confidant at the time; he seemed to be the John the Baptist who was close to Hitler's heart. Of course, Speer's intelligence, his extraordinary organizational talent, his carefree manner of presenting himself, his ambition and his striving for recognition and power spoke in his favor—yes, he already felt he was the chosen one. So it was no wonder that Stephan placed him on the acanthus-decorated capital of the High Column to pay homage to him.

But towards the end, doubts set in, and then the

Christian soldiers brought about the downfall of the high-ranking man. After his conviction, a cruel path through decades lay ahead of him, which he strictly outlined in order to regain the respect that befitted his nature. He began this path with willpower and tenacity and followed it through to the end.

. There is no doubt that he believes in himself and in his strange mission. In his own way, under strange circumstances, he has once again achieved his goal. So now he stands once more on a high pillar, completely transformed, as Baal Teschuwa, as his friend, the rabbi Geis, called him, "the son of repentance." And as such, he has written his "memoirs," which American historian Professor Eugene Davidson praised as "an incomparable historical testimony" and "an absolutely priceless document." Upon reading the "Spandau Diaries" that followed, the writer Zuckmayer was left breathless and almost speechless!

Speer begins his "memoirs" with an aphorism by theologian Karl Barth. It would have been more appropriate to start with Stephan's caricature, as this would have prepared readers for the confessions of a converted sinner, for the views of a saint!

Führer headquarters
;61

I knew Hermann Giesler from 1937 until the end of the war through conversations with Adolf Hitler. Hitler had him into his urban development ideas and plans and entrusted him with the plans for Munich and his hometown of Linz.

Giesler's nature was marked by an inner modesty that can only be found in people whose professional skills are combined with high moral character.

. At the same time, he was not afraid to express his own opinions.

The way he did this was also appreciated by Hitler.

Hitler repeatedly emphasized how much he enjoyed talking to Giesler, how these conversations distracted him from his worries and refreshed him.

Adolf Hitler grew to trust Giesler more and more as the war progressed. This explains why he also discussed topics with him that were of great concern to him. He confided his thoughts on these matters to Giesler.

Nicolaus von Below

Colonel and adjutant of the Luftwaffe

to the Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces

from 1936 to May 1, 1945

Detmold 1974

Principles

I will defend the empire and the kingdom of Caesar,
as I do those whom I know will change; let those
enter who wish to live in peace,
INFIDUS EXCLUDI TIMEAT VEL CARCERE TRUDI.

The Gate of Capua

built by the Staufer Emperor Frederick II in 1239

On February 25, 1939, my wife and I were guests of Adolf Hitler at his private residence on Prinzregentenplatz in Munich. Also invited were Reichsleiter Schwarz and Bouhler with their wives.

The conversation during the simple lunch focused on urban planning and architecture. I was well aware that Adolf Hitler wanted emphasize the importance of my tasks to Reich Treasurer Schwarz and the head of the Führer's Chancellery, Bouhler, while at the same time emphasizing the trust he placed in me. The meeting was intended to serve my task of redesigning Munich. That would probably only be important to note in a private chronicle. But after the meal, the ladies had retired to the adjoining room for a

conversation about artists they knew, an adjutant brought news and press reports, which Adolf Hitler skimmed through. One of these reports apparently prompted him to change the subject. This was followed by a lecture that impressed me greatly with its intense seriousness. Adolf Hitler's presentation of his thoughts, imbued with willpower, was fascinating.

We stood around him, and he spoke in a quiet, calm voice. First, he went Starting from Germany's relationship with England, he then outlined the entire political situation and described the changed world situation with the emerging power blocs. His thoughts and explanations were interwoven with a historical review of Napoleon and Europe at that time. He touched on the policies of Pitt the Elder, which established England's world power position in the 18th and 19th centuries and were linked to the goal of lasting European hegemony. This led to the temporary continuation of the "balance of power," which ultimately and inevitably led to World War I in 1914. Adolf Hitler said:

England remains stuck in 19th-century political thinking. Its policies are always directed against the strongest European power on the continent. England does not want a peaceful agreement between Germany and Poland, because in the eyes of the English, this could only lead to a renewed strengthening of Germany, and they want to prevent that at all costs. They want to maintain the balance of power in Europe, naturally to England's advantage and at Europe's expense. But in the future, this will only benefit Russia and serve to promote communism.

England refuses to recognize that the balance of power in the world has changed. Europe no longer means the world. Power blocs have formed, clearly recognizable in geographical terms and outside the individual European states and all possible "balance" alliances. Only a united Europe can hold its own in this world of blocs.

But the prerequisite for this much-needed unity would be reconciliation with England. However, all our efforts have failed, and I have no hope left that an understanding will be reached. Completely failing to recognize that the 20th century sets different standards, that the threat from the East, from the Bolshevik colossus with its openly declared objectives, must now force the Western world, "Europe," into unity—no, England persists in its old ideas.

Worse still, almost unbelievable, but true: England is no longer concerned with the balance of power in Europe; England's goal is the destruction of Germany!

We have set ourselves the goal of shaking off the yoke of the Versailles dictates, reuniting the German people, and establishing unity—which is our right. We want to oppose the Marxist Russian-Asian Bolshevism

that threatens us with our national socialism, overcome class struggle and unemployment, and awaken the will to live in the people through new goals. This is contrasted by the openly expressed desire for destruction. The German haters, the clique with Jewish connections, the entire Jewish world are sending their propagandists ahead. Through the press, which they control or which is subservient to them, they declared war on us with the aim of destruction on the very first day we came to power!

Need I remind you that the International Jewish Federation, through its president Samuel Untermyer, declared war on us as early as 1933? This was reported worldwide by the New York Times: The war that had now been decided would be waged until the destruction of Germany—Samuel called it a holy war! But that is by no means the only declaration of war—these statements are coming from England to America to Australia.

The Jewish writer Emil Ludwig Cohn has recognized that I, on the other hand, want peace. He writes: "Hitler does not want war, but he will be forced into it, and soon. As in 1914, the last word lies with England." In connection with the name Cohn, this sounds like idle talk—can one take such a thing seriously? And yet...!

I know what you are thinking and want to say to me: The Ostmark is united with the Reich, the Sudeten crisis was resolved with England's signature, and there is certainly a willingness to reach an agreement on the corridor issue with Danzig...

I doubt it! You can still see Chamberlain

waving the umbrella symbol of peace as he steps out of the plane, along with France's Daladier, both enthusiastically welcomed and surrounded by spontaneous expressions of joy at the preservation of peace.

I see it differently! Of course, this joy at the preservation of peace is genuine—just as it is with us, because we also want peace. But let us not deceive ourselves. I never had the impression during the negotiations with Chamberlain that this was the case, and I am being honest. Believe me, the signing of the Munich Agreement in no way means recognition and agreement that Germans belong to Germans. De facto, the British signature can only be explained by their current military weakness. They want to gain time, quite simply gain time; they are not yet ready, either in terms of their rearmament or in terms of the encirclement they are striving for in their usual manner.

I completely agree with Ribbentrop's prediction: England is arming itself for war on all levels, economically, politically, and militarily. England wants war, not the people, of course, but other forces are pushing for it and will one day trigger it—I know who they are!

England and the forces behind it are not only interested in

the elimination of the National Socialist government, just as they were not only interested in the elimination of the Hohenzollerns at the time – the proof of this is the Versailles Dictate.

Now they have realized that National Socialism is capable of fully developing all the forces inherent in the German people, and that is why they want to destroy us. It is a conspiracy against a national and social Germany! Not only does their egocentric thinking prevent a united Europe, they also refuse to allow me to unite the Germans into one people and one empire, which is a matter of course for any nation of honor. Our Reich and our living space are based on more than a thousand years of history, albeit with periods of weakness, and the people live under this historical claim, consciously or unconsciously.

I can only avoid this conflict, the contours of which are quite clear to me, by submitting and thus renouncing the right to life

of the German people. But even that would only postpone the conflict!

Remember, the power groups that have come together want war! They do not recognize the Germans' right to life. They continue to stir up trouble and will not rest. The more time they have, the worse it will be for us. For time is against us! Consider where we might be today if we had been granted the breakthrough to power in 1923. Ten years! Time has been lost. It would have been so necessary to consolidate the people into a nation, into a socially just unity! This time is missing to allow a National Socialist elite to grow in all areas, including the military, with faith in Germany and a clear understanding of the necessity of our policies.

We asked ourselves, quite rightly: if he was so convinced that war was being forced upon us, that it was inevitable, why bother with architecture, urban planning, environmental design? Well, that was in keeping with his nature: on the one hand, he had to expect the worst and do everything in his power to counter it, yet he could not neglect the other part of his actual task, the goals he had set himself: shaping the environment in accordance with our National Socialist ideology. The fact that he included imponderables, as often happens in the course of history, was also fundamental to his way of acting, of building and designing and not just arming himself. We should see in this his hope, albeit slight, a very vague hope for the reasonable will to self-preservation on the part of those who were to fight, who had to risk their lives.

lives.

For the power groups that are stirring up war, that want to unleash it as soon as they have spun their webs, as soon as they believe themselves to be armed... they

do not fight! They want to impose war on us! They have blinded themselves, they stand in darkness, albeit differently than Brecht in his Threepenny Opera, but the melody is the same: hatred and threats!

Adolf Hitler turned away, took a sip of water, then continued speaking. His dark voice, though still calm and quiet, had a metallic tone:

What I must strive for is to prevent or break through the encirclement of Germany, regardless of the direction it takes. Above all, we must not allow ourselves to be cut off from raw materials. At the same time, we must deprive them of the opportunity to starve us out, as they did during the World War and for years afterwards. This is essential for our self-assertion. Nor must I allow them the time they need for their military armament to destroy us. And I will not leave them the huge aircraft carrier, almost in the heart of Germany, a bridgehead and base for bombing Germany, as they have written*, and therefore of great military importance. This product of the victorious powers of 1918, which calls itself "absolutely at their service,"

Czechoslovakia. If this struggle now becomes necessary, I do not fear it!

But within the Reich, I will then ensure that

what happened in 1917/18 will not be repeated: the demoralization and disintegration of the German fighting spirit. The struggle that is being forced upon us is our destiny. It is a matter of existence—of life or death!

If the German soldier now risks his life, I must protect him against any attempt to hinder his struggle.

I will take ruthless action, and I feel entitled to do so! A shiver ran through me, and I thought of Frederick II's threat, carved into the gate of Capua, the entrance to his empire: "By Caesar's command, I am the guardian of the kingdom!"

I will fall into disgrace, knowing that I am fickle. Those who are willing to live blamelessly will surely pass through, but the unfaithful fear banishment and death in prison*. It is always about space

. Conversation in the Reich Chancellery on the day of the return of Memel, March 22, 1939*.

Negotiations with the Lithuanian government were still ongoing. It was late afternoon, and the signing of the agreement on the return of Memel and Memelland was expected that evening.

In the hours leading up to a decision, Adolf Hitler's restlessness became visible, usually driving him to pace back and forth, accompanied by impassioned statements. Often these were topics that had nothing to do with the situation, and I had the impression that he wanted to gain some distance.

On this late afternoon, for example, he spoke of Mussolini's custom of "changing of the guard." He didn't think much of it. He said that in order to cope with the many different tasks and to arrive at reasonable solutions that would last, he employed men he trusted. Of course, he had to be convinced that they had what it took to do the job successfully. But he had to give them time to settle in and wait until they became confident in their ability to get things done.

They must have the resources commensurate with the scope of their tasks. He must give them strength and support. Replacement, yes, if they fail or abuse the trust placed in them:

Do I want followers? How will I find them, now and in the near future? Magnetic power would be necessary for me to attract what is iron!

By the way, did I know his homeland? Roughly, I replied, from my study trips I was familiar with the Inn landscape and its buildings, the small towns such as Wasserburg, Burghausen, and as far as Innsbruck.

No, he meant the Danube landscape—Linz, Melk, the Wachau, Krems, the magnificent monasteries, I should take time to visit them. Braunau am Donau, yes, he was born there, but his real home was Linz:

Braunau? Listen to a little anecdote: the Reich President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, was very reserved during the early days of my chancellorship. Slowly, I gained his trust. Over time, he became very attached to me, more than that, I don't think I'm going too far when I say he became a fatherly friend to me.

I really appreciated his straightforward manner and sincerity. One day, he remarked, "By the way, I know your birthplace, Braunau. I passed through that town in 1866 when I was a young lieutenant." I told him that was completely new to me, and it turned out he meant Braunau in Bohemia.

I had trouble explaining to him that my birthplace was Braunau am Inn in Upper Austria. I convinced him with a map from an atlas.

He was very interested. Why, I wondered? Well, he said, "So that's how it was with the 'Bohemian corporal.' They lied to me about every little detail!"

Adolf Hitler imitated the deep voice that was characteristic of the field marshal. He went on to say that this had prompted him to make the ethnological reference that even before the time of Charlemagne, his homeland had belonged to the German settlement area.

After a short silence, Adolf Hitler talked to me about early and 368

historical ethnography, about the migration of peoples and its causes and effects. The natural instinct for survival, he said, forces us to fight for existence, and the prerequisite for surviving this struggle for existence in the long term is space. Even a modern, high-tech community or an industrialized nation could probably exist, but without allocated space, they would not be able to survive in the long term; they would strangle themselves. Space is either given or it is fought for through land grabs, and it must always be defended through struggle; that is a law of nature!

According to this view, world peace is an unrealistic idea. Humanity would breathe a sigh of relief if it had the certainty of being free from all threats and spared from war. Security and continuity

in human development, well, human history teaches us otherwise.

World peace, like peace in the individual, is an enticing utopia. Many saw the League of Nations as a promising, achievable possibility for the future

. But it is a platitude to say that life is a struggle, because the individual, the community, and the people are fatefully interwoven in it.

If we disregard state structures such as Switzerland, a scenic nature reserve, or the roulette table that is Monaco, how could peace be maintained in the world?

Through the League of Nations with its hypocritical promises, or through reason and justice? We should have learned enough from experience. Through a pacifist attitude? By avoiding conflict and refusing to resist, even when our very existence is at stake? For a community, a people, that would be tantamount to self-abandonment, assimilation, or disintegration: we would become prey to those who do not renounce their rights, who act out of a vital instinct and are prepared to fight if necessary. The willingness to give in on principle ultimately ends in the surrender of substance and submission.

It annoys him when he hears the old saying, "The smarter one gives in." Of course, that's very easy: you avoid difficulties, you agree with the stupid and the short-sighted. No—the smarter person should not give in, he must assert himself; he is obliged to do so. But this obligation does not mean exaggeration, stubbornness, or dogmatism, but rather sober, reasonable consideration of all possibilities, persuasion, and only when necessary: toughness!

He quoted the first three points of our party program, which he had announced on February 24, 1920:

Unification of all Germans on the basis of the right of peoples to self-determination into a Greater Germany, equality of the German

people vis-à-vis other nations, abolition of the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain,

and thirdly: we demand land and soil (colonies) to feed our people and settle our surplus population*.

These were not only the first three program goals, they were also the most important, and he had made it his life's work to achieve them! They were tempting promises of peace, justice, and self-determination, proclaimed by the American president, world-alien illusions of a sick brain, but just right for undermining the will to defend the country. Germany had stopped fighting, and what followed was The Versailles Dictate; it was not about eliminating the Hohenzollerns, the Junkers, or the new form of government, democracy, but simply about destroying the German substance. Instead of the solemnly proclaimed self-determination, which had been trampled underfoot, arbitrariness had come upon us. Rarely had a people been so violated: starvation, robbery, and the division of German territory, combined with the destruction of the remnants of the German armed forces. Without protection, the German borders would have been open, and the Freikorps would not have formed to fight against land grabs and Bolshevik anarchy: Germany was blamed for the war, hatred, malice, and the will to destroy were the basis of the Versailles Dictate, and we were treated accordingly—worse than they had ever dared to treat their colonial peoples! Only the American land grab was more brutal.

Alsace, the old German-speaking cultural region, was lost to the Reich, and the Saar region was assigned to France. After a vote in which over 90% voted for Germany, it was returned to the Reich in 1935. South Tyrol was separated from Austria, or rather from the Ostmark, and is now under Italian rule. The multi-ethnic state of Austria had long been a force for order and stability, albeit a questionable one, but it existed nonetheless. At the end of the war, it fell apart. This disintegration was dictatorially sealed in St. Germain.

At the same time, however, the "victors" created arbitrary entities and strange divisions. Once again, a multi-ethnic state emerged, consisting of Sudeten Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Poles, subjugated by the Czechs.

East Prussia was cut off and separated from the Reich territory by the "Polish Corridor," which claimed almost all of West Prussia, the settlement area cultivated by Germans, Danzig, the old German Hanseatic city, now a "free city" with Polish claims, and of course the colonies.

All the other little things, like Memel? We are still waiting for the reunification to happen!

Adolf Hitler then spoke about the hopelessness with which he began the struggle in 1920

. Only an unbridled faith in Germany and an unyielding will, the appeal to idealists, had led to power. This would have created the conditions for replacing the disunity with a new order

unbending will, the appeal to idealists, had led to power. This would create the conditions for replacing division with a new order, strengthening the will to live among the people in their hopeless situation, and creating a new force field through idealism and courage: the German nation! Now it was also possible for him to fight against the shameful Versailles Treaty.

Only then had he been able to begin implementing the party program of 1920.

Convinced solely by National Socialist Germany, over 90% of the population of the Saarland had voted in favor of joining the Reich. The Ostmark had followed—who could doubt that this had been a genuine referendum? But there were also threatening aspects. The beginning of a new encirclement had become apparent.

Three years ago, France had concluded a military pact with Soviet Russia. His warnings, conveyed by diplomats, had been unsuccessful, and he had been forced to extend military sovereignty to the borders of the Reich. With the abolition of demilitarization, a further humiliation of the dictates had come to an end.

At the same time as the annexation of the Ostmark to the Reich, unrest had begun in the arbitrary state of Czechoslovakia. For France, Soviet Russia, and also for England, Czechoslovakia had been an extremely important strategic stronghold, and they had not shied away from declaring in public that this arbitrary entity could most easily be destroyed by bombs from Germany.

The subjugated Sudeten Germans had been denied the autonomy they were entitled to for 20 years, and now, even from the Reich's point of view, all that remained was self-determination. England had tried hard and doggedly, using unfair means, to undermine the Sudeten Germans' right to self-determination. The English did not want a referendum. They knew full well that the cession of the Sudetenland would mark the beginning of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, because the Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish minorities would also break away from this arbitrary construct. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was now created from what was left of a state that was no longer viable. England, France, and the Soviets had lost their aircraft carrier.

The Czechs living under German protectorate rule could certainly that they would be better treated by us than their hateful Benesch had treated the ethnic Germans. They would be granted full autonomy, their language would be preserved, and their right to independence would not be infringed upon, unless they attempted to cause unrest or even rebellion, in which case he would be forced to use force. Loyalty, however, would be met with generosity.

In all the negotiations he had conducted so far to overcome the Versailles dictate, he had been forced to conclude that the British and French

had read our party program more carefully than our party comrades. Already in the first sentence, "Unification of all Germans on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples to form a Greater Germany," the English had seen a dangerous thwarting of their continental policy, and the French had seen a threat. For the Italians, too, this point in the program was problematic with regard to South Tyrol, and indeed already with the annexation of the Ostmark.

England is open to discussion when it comes to the right to self-determination for the Ashanti, but not when it came to German legal claims: Germans to Germany could lead to a strengthening of Germany, and that contradicted the English principles of 19th-century European policy. But it also contradicted the principles of French politics since Richelieu. He had avoided any stubbornness; rather, sober consideration after the return of the Saar region had dictated the final renunciation of Alsace if this ensured peace between Germany and France! He had declared this renunciation clearly and without reservation and justified it in his speech in Weimar in 1938 before thousands of people. He considered this to be right, even though it concerned an old German-speaking cultural region.

The renunciation of the most beautiful landscape in Europe – South Tyrol – was painful. However, he expected protection and recognition of the legitimate autonomy of the ethnic Germans separated from the Reich.

Territorial disagreements between Germany and England existed only with regard to the former German colonies, which were now in English possession. But the British were accommodating in this regard and had made him a downright grotesque offer, which he wanted to come back to. What stood between Germany and England was the incredible blindness with which English politicians defended a political doctrine that had now degenerated into a dogma: always to fight the strongest power in Europe for reasons of power politics, which were of course also significant in terms of the global economy. The English were incapable of thinking differently and failed to recognize that conditions had changed since the World War, that a colossus was emerging in Europe, founded on a huge Asian base: Soviet Russia. This power bloc, which was growing stronger year by year, was asserting its claim to world power with its dangerous communist ideology. England fails to recognize that it is not Germany but Soviet Russia that will become the strongest power in Europe, and that, as in the past, the German nation is the only bulwark against the East.

Marshal Pilsudski had recognized this. If he wanted to preserve the Polish state, this would only be possible in the long term with the support of a strong Germany. With Marshal Pilsudski, he had reached an understanding

on the Danzig Corridor issue in a reasonable manner without giving the Western powers any opportunity to interfere. Of course, it was important for Poland to have access to the Baltic Sea and its own port.

and he did not fail to recognize this necessity, even if this access route led through the German-populated former West Prussia. Incidentally, he found that the term "corridor" was an incredible trivialization.

On the other hand, we were surely entitled to a direct extraterritorial connection with East Prussia, both by road and by rail.

In order to avoid any differences, the Foreign Minister, on his instructions, had sent the Polish government a generous proposal, which was reasonable and extremely moderate on our part. He had even declared himself willing to guarantee the Polish borders of the corridor and to extend the German-Polish treaty for 10 years or even longer, although he was aware of what this would mean for the German people and for a certain side.

Gdansk was not up for discussion. According to the will of 96% of the Germans in this city, it must be politically reattached to the Reich, but without disadvantaging Polish interests in the economic sphere. He did not know what more he could do. He was all the more touched by the harshness with which his efforts to reach a peaceful settlement were being met. He sensed resistance not only from the Polish government. The English and the French were encouraging the Poles to act unreasonably, they wanted to prevent any peaceful solution, they were provoking and playing poker, and he had the feeling that they could see his cards. The whole thing was strange. He had therefore decided to suspend the German-Polish Corridor-Danzig Agreement until such time as there was an opportunity for reasonable negotiations. The political events and the associated territorial changes had been rushed through in the past year, and a period of calm would be beneficial. After thinking about it for a long time, Adolf Hitler said: Unless I am forced to take harsh measures against my will!

At this point, I would like to interject what I experienced about a month later. Adolf Hitler had invited me, along with Speer, Breker, and Thorak, to his 50th birthday celebration. Before the military parade on the east-west axis began, delegations from the Reich were received. The last group was from Danzig. They entered the large reception room in high spirits—unusually, the doors were closed behind them. After some time, they returned with serious and gloomy expressions. I thought of what Adolf Hitler had said to me: "I have decided to suspend the Corridor-Danzig settlement." He must have discussed this with the Danzigers and urged them to be patient.

Adolf Hitler was still waiting for the treaty with Lithuania to be concluded.

about Memel, which Ribbentrop was supposed to report to him by telephone: Yes, Giesler, it's always about space? I'm thinking of the third point of our party program: we need land and soil to feed our people and settle our surplus population.

He had put colonies in brackets at the time because he had his own opinion about the value and worthlessness of colonies. The Versailles Dictate had taken the colonies away from us with false justifications and distortions. The Germans were certainly equal, if not better, colonizers than the English, French, Belgians, Dutch, and Portuguese.

There was therefore no reason to renounce the return of the former German colonies. Our claim was entirely justified. A year ago, England had made a proposal to settle our colonial claims, which had not yet been made. This offer was almost perfidious and would have exposed us to new difficulties – he did not want to discuss it further!

For him, the colonial question was not a priority, which is why he had not enter into negotiations. He was concerned about the Germans in the areas that had declared independence.

He did not want any more German colonies, at least not in the sense that the term was still understood: colonial possessions! We should be glad that we were free of these outdated ideas. The gain was only apparent; it would drain our strength and alienate us. In a serious situation, we would lose these overseas territories; we could not defend them.

But the colonial question is also developing in new ways, certainly more rapidly than can be seen today when looking back at the past. I need only think of the fact that large areas of what is now the United States were once colonies of England and France, and those in Central and South America were colonies of Spain. In the meantime, independent states have formed. The same will happen in general, especially in Africa:

I am fundamentally convinced that a people, including individuals, must not lose their connection to the environment into which they were born

. People abroad, but also among our own intelligentsia, who are estranged from the soil, mock the short phrase "blood and soil." And

However, historical review, especially in ancient times, confirms this connection.

Only in connection with the environment does a people develop the will to live and the strength to create a down-to-earth culture with diverse and subtle distinctions.

Furthermore, I believe that the Germans' roots in their natural habitat, in the soil, are particularly distinctive, even necessary. I am thinking of the mythological figure of Antaeus, who always found strength when he touched the ground.

the ground. The German people are spatially conditioned by the continent, and their expansion must not lose its connection with their original "homeland"—I use the word deliberately!

For example, any German who emigrates to America is lost to his mother country, he becomes an American, he loses his connection to his homeland and, in our view, he degenerates because he becomes too deeply rooted in foreign soil.

He is convinced that any territorial expansion in the form of overseas territories brings only limited material benefits and success only for a limited time. At the same time, however, it brings about a consciously felt, albeit initially tolerated, oppression of the tribes, peoples, or races living in the colonized territories.

Colonization is usually accompanied by Christian missionary activity, which is incompatible with their racial thinking. Instead of trust and development, rebellion arises, and hatred is the result!

Adolf Hitler went on to talk about the seizure of practically uninhabited or sparsely populated areas and continents, such as the territory of the present-day USA, Canada, and Australia. He outlined the brutal displacement or extermination of the indigenous inhabitants, who were far inferior in terms of development. The resulting states, arbitrary entities that might attain material significance and power, would be without tradition and would have achieved no form of development; no culture would have grown on their soil.

It was strange that the people of German descent were the first to take root in the new soil and seek to identify with it more strongly than others. He went on to consider the difference between a farm and a farmstead. What he said next about the colonial problem seems important to me:

If I assert any claim to the former colonies and enforce this claim, it is only to demonstrate how I, how we National Socialists, who are said to be arrogant in our racial thinking and surrounded by fences, would tackle the smoldering problem of the colonies.

I would view our former colonies as territories and countries assigned to us for economic exchange. We offer them our help so that they can develop independence in accordance with their own character and way of life. We give them the opportunity to develop into sovereign entities or states and at the same time bind them to us in mutual interest. Our interest lies in expanding the self-sufficiency that has been imposed on us.

Of course, Adolf Hitler hoped that this exchange would provide Germany with important raw materials such as copper and vegetable oil, and he emphasized that he did not want to do without coffee, tea, cocoa, fruit—in short, luxury goods for German households.

If we made it clear to them that we were committed to our own race and way of life and would recognize theirs, then, he believed, we could gain their respect, they would become our friends because we respected them, and they would remain loyal to us. Adolf Hitler stopped and said: It is important that we not only recognize their independent existence, but also that their sovereign form be generally recognized, so that they are not regarded as 'German colonial possessions' and are not involved in complications in an emergency.

An aide called Adolf Hitler to the telephone in the old Bismarck living room. He returned looking happy and relaxed: Memel and the Memel Territory, the stolen territory with 160,000 German inhabitants, now belonged to the Reich once again.

Obstacles to peace

November 8, 1939

After a simple lunch together at the Osteria Bavaria, a small and modest restaurant typical of Munich, Adolf Hitler and I drove to my planning room and studio in Prinzregentenstraße, a side wing of the National Museum.

In the large room, the urban models and plans were clearly arranged for discussion. As always, Adolf Hitler listened to my explanations with keen interest. He asked questions, compared the plans with the plastic appearances of the models, made suggestions, and made decisions, mostly intuitively, followed by a brief explanation.

Sometimes he gave me encouragement, a little praise, such as: "Giesler, You are hard-working, or: That is exactly what I had in mind.

That was also the case that afternoon. Between 5 and 6 o'clock, one of the telephones on my desk rang—it was a direct line from Berlin, without going through the switchboard. An SS adjutant picked up the receiver. He raised his eyebrows: "For you, my Führer, urgent!"

Adolf Hitler picked up the receiver, then said: Yes? Göring? Yes... what? Intensive concentration? A slight blush spread across his face.

That's unbelievable... Stop everything immediately... I'll be in Berlin tomorrow morning, very early... Prepare everything for the meeting... No, I'm not flying, it's too unsafe in this situation. You'll be notified.

He hung up the phone, turned to us: "I want to be in Berlin as early as possible tomorrow... well rested." Then to his adjutants: "Find out the possible departure and arrival times for our special train immediately. We're leaving earlier; we don't want to be behind schedule, but ahead of the regular Berlin trains... with a good time gap."

Martin Bormann replied: "And your traditional speech at the Bürgerbräu?" "It will be brought forward; the schedule will depend on the departure time of the train.

train. I must arrive in Berlin well rested. Schaub, at what time does the old community usually gather at the Bürgerbräu?

They're all together now, said Julius Schaub, they're chatting and waiting for you, my Führer, that's the custom.

Adolf Hitler went back with me to the models and plans, we discussed and drew details until the departure time of his train was set.

. "I have a few more questions for you, my Führer." "Giesler, accompany me, also to the train, we can talk until departure."

On the way to his apartment on Prinzregentenplatz, he was silent. In his living room, he said quietly to me:

My plans have been thwarted. Apparently, there is a leak in the high military ranks, or even—I dare not think it—open treason!

He began his speech at the Bürgerbräu earlier than usual and ended it earlier than usual as well. On the special train, Adolf Hitler said to me: "Giesler, I don't have time for any decisions I still have to make. I'll be very tense. Come to Berlin with your plans the week after next." The train began its journey.

When I came out of the north exit of the station, security service cars drove up with their lights on. A Sturmführer I knew ran up to me. "You're too late," I said, "the Führer's train has left." He turned to another SS officer: "Notify the station command immediately. The train must be stopped in Augsburg and reported to the Führer." Then he turned to me: "A bomb has exploded in the Bürgerbräu, behind the lectern. There are dead and many injured. It was an assassination attempt on the Führer!"

That was on Wednesday evening, November 8, 1939, and it was my first glimpse into the strange intertwining of betrayal and assassination aimed at the destruction of Adolf Hitler. Some time later, he said

He told me he was convinced that this assassination was not the work of a fanatical lone wolf, but rather that an Anglo-Jewish clique* was behind it. Impatience in wartime? Reich Chancellery, January 1940

I was at the Reich Chancellery looking at urban development plans. After lunch in the large dining room designed by Professor Ludwig Troost, which impressed by its simple, austere, and at the same time modern classicism, Adolf Hitler took me into the adjoining winter garden and out. I reported to him on the status of the Munich plans.

He assured me that I could hardly imagine how much he was looking forward to the time when he could devote more time to these tasks. He wanted to see how the German environment would be shaped according to our National Socialist goals, how our cities would find their traffic-friendly, modern form without losing their originality and character.

He set himself the task of achieving national unity and, after overcoming the insidious Versailles dictate, social reconstruction combined with environmental design – exactly as expressed in the name of our party.

Instead, he had to wage a war that served neither the interests of Germany nor those of Europe. He had to argue with his generals and waste precious time in the vague hope of convincing them of what was strategically and tactically necessary in our situation. With only a few exceptions, they were thinking in terms that were long outdated. The leading generals at the head of the army and, in some cases, at the head of the armed forces were thinking in terms of the past. When he stood before them, listened to their arguments, looked into their eyes and into their eyes, he was not sure whether they had the leadership qualities necessary not only to understand the harshness of the times, but also to get through them!

Incompetence was evident where it was not expected, bordering on almost sabotage. He even feared a chatty permeability? But he did not allow the thought of deliberate betrayal to enter his mind, as this seemed impossible to him, given the ethical obligation of the officer corps and his absolute commitment to tradition and oath. Everything in him rebelled against the idea that an officer could no longer feel bound by it—although, well, he had to be vigilant! Adolf Hitler stopped:

You remember the incident in your studio on November 8, when I received a telephone call informing me of a strange occurrence that forced me to cancel all my scheduled military appointments?

As bad as the whole thing had been and as much time as it would cost, it had had two significant aspects of fateful coincidence for him: I escaped the assassination attempt, and I gained the freedom to overturn a strategic plan that belonged to the past and replace it with a new concept of attack, which I expect to be a resounding success—in the truest sense of the word! We continued pacing back and forth in the large room. He remained convinced that the bomber had been acting on orders.

There was a long silence, then Adolf Hitler continued:

Now a new incident is worrying me. A few days ago, on January 10, the Ia officer of an air division flew out of the Münster area in the middle of the night and fog, carrying the operation plans and deployment orders, heading south to rear command posts. And he did so despite a flight ban and in disregard of orders! The pilot got lost and landed in Belgium, an emergency landing, I was told. I simply cannot imagine that something like this is possible. Now, whether it was irresponsible recklessness, disobeying orders, or treason, what the officer had in his briefcase is most likely in Belgium, and the British and French are aware of it. I was able to determine which documents are now available to the enemy for their perusal.

They are attack orders relating to the northern sector of the air force, based on

the Schlieffen Plan, and this new old Schlieffen Plan is the product of the highest military intelligence of the German General Staff. These great strategists were still working on strengthening the right wing. These strategic plans, even those of Schlieffen, belong to the past, reheated by those stuck in the past, but that does not make them any better for today.

Of course, the enemy had known about these plans since at least 1914, and since then, he was convinced, they had been informed by some well-informed source that nothing had changed. Adolf Hitler paused, then said sarcastically: as far as the German General Staff is concerned!

Now the enemy had once again received it in writing, in some detail, confirming the new old Schlieffen Plan. He would make use of it. He hoped that the enemy would not suspect any ulterior motive in the Ia's handing over of the operation plans, as there were sometimes strange ways of thinking. But otherwise, he was quite happy with the whole thing, because he had long since come up with a different plan for the campaign in France, unless this senseless struggle was spared us at the last moment.

But he had given up hope: behind England and France stood the forces that wanted war. He felt prepared, had carefully considered everything and thought through every detail: I am very confident!

The invitation to Paris

In the winter of 1940, some time after the conversation about the strange incident of January 10, I was a guest of Adolf Hitler at the Reich Chancellery for a few days. One evening was particularly significant for me. We sat in a small circle around the fireplace in the large living room from Bismarck's time.

Discussions about urban development measures in Munich had preceded this, which also determined the topic of further conversation. Adolf Hitler spoke about his experiences in Rome and Florence, recounting in a completely relaxed manner everything he had seen and experienced there during his stay in May 1938.

He described the grand impressions and the little banalities that went on alongside, such as the impressive high rooms of the Quirinale, where he was staying as a guest of the king. Their dimensions conveyed a sense of dignity and grandeur. But when he wanted to go to sleep, he was embarrassed because he did not know how or where to turn off the lights, as the switches were hidden:

The situation reminded me of an anecdote from the small, masterfully illustrated book by the painter Gulbransson*. At the time, he had been called back to his northern home in Munich from Berlin, and he describes how he spent the night in Berlin. After much effort, he finally managed to blow out the gas lights in his hotel room.

home in the north to Munich, and he describes how he spent the night in Berlin. After much effort, he finally managed to blow out the gas lights in his hotel room. Adolf Hitler laughed. But the hotel staff and the doctor had even more trouble the next morning trying to breathe life back into him!

Well, I didn't have that problem, but there was a huge chandelier. My orderly and valet solved the problem.

Adolf Hitler then described a city tour in an open carriage, next to

The king? Or should I say, "beside the emperor and king"? We drove past the papal territory, with a view of the Vatican.

Then I saw St. Peter's Square from afar with Bernini's magnificent colonnade, the fountain, the obelisk, the façade of the Thorn, and behind it, almost shimmering, Michelangelo's dome! And while I was still gazing spellbound, Her Majesty or His Majesty nudged me in the side with his elbow, chuckled brightly, and pointed furtively to the low and high ecclesiastical dignitaries. They drew their medieval hats with a sideways flourish and bowed deeply.

And it happened again and again... I wanted to take in the squares and streets, take in the buildings, but then came the elbow again, accompanied by loud giggles. He was clearly enjoying the fact that these displays of reverence inevitably included me. I was glad when the ride ended, because it was slowly becoming difficult for me to, well, you can imagine how I felt. If I saw one of these shepherds of souls in time, whom I could assume would trigger the elbow and the giggling of His Majesty, I tried to distract him by pointing to a building on the other side, but even then I was unlucky—there was one standing there too!

We laughed, and a question arose. No, said Adolf Hitler, he was by no means "under the cross"; I had the impression that he was a very free thinker. The queen, on the other hand, was different. At a large reception, I had the honor of escorting her. There was a concert with artists I knew (he named the singer, I forgot her name) ... and Gigli. The hall and the flower decorations were magnificent. So I led Her Majesty, she was very regal... but very low-cut; whether to my honor or to my detriment, she was wearing a crucifix... no, not just a cross, but rather a Christ on a golden cross. I couldn't help noticing that Christ was in bad company.

Adolf Hitler remained serious and thoughtful, while I struggled not to laugh and gritted my teeth. Then he continued:

But I completely lost my composure, my behavior was undignified, because after the concert—it was a high-ranking event—I stood up and thanked the artists. You just don't do that; you let yourself be entertained

or amused, but you keep your distance. Her Majesty did not forgive me this faux pas; she made it very clear to me, the plebeian.

When I returned to Germany, I ordered that the pensions of former SPD ministers such as Severing and others be increased, because they had ultimately saved me from something terrible. When I think of the Duce...! It was only in Florence that the Duce came to life, regained his personality. Rome stood under the sign of majesty, aristocracy, the military, and the court, Florence under the sign of itself and, of course, the party. What a city! Harsh and austere, yet flowery in an idiosyncratic setting full of natural charm!

And that brought us back to the topic that fascinated him most. Now comparisons were drawn, the fundamentals from which a city is formed—the city on the river, the city oriented toward the water like Venice, or toward the sea like Naples. Adolf Hitler smiled:

I also experienced a little bit of the grotesque... It started off well: a gala evening at the opera in Naples, and my good friend Linge was desperately searching my luggage for my tailcoat and all the accessories. Time was passing, I was getting nervous, but finally, albeit late, he appeared.

It was a splendid performance of "Aids," with magnificent voices. Suddenly, towards the end, a huge beam fell from the fly loft onto the stage. Noise and cries of terror interrupted the duet. But soon, after this "highlight," the opera came to an end. Great applause. Then I heard two of the escort command behind me, I don't want to mention their names: "All respect, yes, they can do that? Hair-raisingly accurate and right on target? Yes, and the cry was completely genuine, completely natural! And how they're falling apart! Boy, when it comes to theater, they're better than us!" They

believed, God knows, that it was planned by the director and was part of the show. Now I could laugh. But then the conversation turned to architecture

. I asked him which buildings in Rome had particularly impressed him.

Of course, the magnificent buildings of ancient Rome, which were impressive simply because of their size: the Colosseum, the Baths of Caracalla, which are still admirable even as ruins. But he was particularly moved by the Pantheon!

After a short silence, we continued our conversation. Adolf Hitler spoke of Budapest, a city deliberately oriented towards the river, as the most beautiful city on the Danube. I could not have known that, despite my many tasks, he would commission me that same year to design a "city on the river," his hometown of Linz on the Danube.

In most cases, water had been the reason for founding a city since time immemorial: the sea with its shipping, the stream, the river with its ford or with the need to subjugate this river by building a bridge. The Romans had been masters at this, and their stone-arched bridges, their wooden constructions over streams, and—reversing the bridge concept—their aqueducts, which had channeled the water into their cities, were exemplary even to this day.

arched bridges, their wooden constructions over streams, and – reversing the idea of bridges – with their aqueducts, they had directed the water into their city.

Necessary fortifications had also

cities develop. He cited a few examples and then spoke about Prague with its Hradčany district and Charles Bridge over the Vltava River.

The unique character of cities grows out of their causes and objectives, shaping their physiognomy and atmosphere. In these cities with a long tradition, one could sense how deeply they were interwoven with the course of history. Here and there, the will of the personalities who had shaped them became visible, commissioning artists who worked with their own unique obsession. But how many artistic gifts, how many talents had been lost because they had not been given the opportunity to develop!

Then we talked about the peculiarities of some cities he knew well. Even the sound of their names enchanted him: Rome, Florence, and Paris. He had studied this urban organism in depth, even in his youth, during his time in Vienna, when he read everything the libraries had to offer on the urban development of Paris, from the Roman founding of the city and the Ile de France to the Paris of Prefect Haussmann. He continued this during his time in Munich before the World War. He admired the continuity of this urban design. This was typical of the French.

Completely independent of the forms of government, Paris had remained the basic idea for them. What the kings had begun, the republic continued, the consul took up and the emperor completed. He recalled famous sequences of squares and plazas, their connection by important street axes: the Louvre, the Tuileries, the Place de la Concorde, the Champs Elysées with the Arc de Triomphe, the Etoile, and the streets radiating out from it.

But it seems to me that what is special about Paris is the connection between its history and its traditions. It was one individual who ultimately forced and implemented this modernization. I deliberately refrain from saying that it was a redesign—no, it was not a redesign in our sense, as the ideological prerequisites for that were lacking. But I find it significant that Napoleon III entrusted the prefect Haussmann with the generous planning and implementation, rather than the city authorities. Ludwig I acted in exactly the same way in Munich, placing the streets, squares, and buildings he had commissioned under state protection. City authorities are too easily subject to petty bourgeois, self-serving thinking, which prevents generous planning and its implementation.

Napoleon III also recognized this, appointing a prefect who forced breakthroughs in the confusing urban structure to create modern road systems, avenues, and boulevards; some of this may have been for military and technical reasons. But without these roads, Paris would have suffocated.

Consider that Haussmann decreed streets 120 meters wide and more at that time—yes, in the age of horse-drawn carriages. Who could have imagined the automobile as a means of transportation back then? Of course, the old city center suffered damage during these urban clearings, which is certainly regrettable. We therefore wanted to take a different approach with our redesigns. But in the end, it was the right thing to do for Paris as a world city. Later, but still in time, a mass transportation system was built in this city that was exemplary for its time: the metro! Now, he knew Paris well from the site plans and the illustrations of the individual buildings, but what did that mean? He didn't know the effect of the streets and buildings in their context. Of course, he had read up on the historical nature of this city, but he had no idea of its atmosphere, its colors, and the effect of the individual scales.

That's how I felt back then when I visited Rome and Florence. I was I was surprised by the connection between the squares, streets, and buildings in the city!

As a soldier in 1914, I hoped to see Paris, but as a politician after the lost war, that was impossible for me... but now I will soon have this experience! You can well imagine what this means to me! I will then also be able to make comparisons, which are indispensable before implementing our planned urban development measures.

Excitedly, I asked: "My leader, you want to see Paris, how is that possible? Does that mean peace?"

"No, I have offered peace, but you see it only as a sign of weakness. You want war, well, you shall have it! You want a war of attrition, but since time is against us, the offensive is ours, for it is our only possible defense."

There was a question circulating among French soldiers: "Mourir pour Danzig?" From the perspective of the Poilus, this question was justified, even for the whole of France, but with England they were under the command of the powerful, just like Poland last year, driven to unreasonableness, to harakiri! In France, something of Richelieu's objectives and spirit could still have an effect.

Something disturbed him in the constellation and gave him cause for concern: Italy! In the last days of the political struggle for a peaceful settlement of the corridor question, the Italians could undoubtedly have helped to prevent the outbreak of war with a clear and unambiguous stance,

Perhaps, he had thought at the time. Apart from the powerful forces in England who were stirring up a war of annihilation against us, there must be other forces, a many-headed conspiracy directed against the German social revolution:

I fear that once we have taken Paris, the Italians will no longer be able to restrain themselves. With Karracho, they will go wild, for there could be military glory and easy spoils for them. And that will diminish our victory and make peace more difficult. They could be of greatest use to us and to themselves with an armed neutrality that ties down enemy forces. But woe betide them if they thwart my plans! I'm just waiting for favorable weather, then this drôle de guerre will be over! Six weeks after the attack begins, we'll be in Paris!

You want to get through the Maginot Line? I experienced trench warfare in France back then — that seems impossible to me, I can't comprehend it!

Giesler, you don't believe me? But I'm sure of it. We'll attack them like wolves, with such force that they won't even have time to react. It's settled — in six weeks, we'll have defeated them! I hereby invite you, Giesler. You'll come with me to see Paris!

Norway — April 1940

During the decisive days of the battle in Norway, especially around Narvik, I was a guest of Adolf Hitler at the Reich Chancellery for lunch and dinner. After the evening military situation reports had been concluded, Adolf Hitler returned to the "Bismarck living room." He sought conversation to pass the time until new reports arrived.

He was restless and tense, and at times he seemed very worried.

It was good that I was there, he said, so he could talk to me about construction issues and try to distract himself. The hours of waiting were terrible. He still had to learn to control himself completely during phases of important decisions. He was too involved in the immediate fighting, which made him feel as if he were back in his days as a soldier. He did not yet have the necessary distance from events.

His greatest concern was the battle for Narvik, which was the reason for his unease. The combat group under Dietl was too weak to hold its own against the massive deployment of enemy troops, whose fighting strength was further bolstered by the English fleet and supplies. ?

?

On his orders, our soldiers were now fighting desperately against this superior force, and we could not help them! Any possibility of reinforcements or supplies from the sea was blocked by the English fleet, and land routes were out of the question.

385

How long will they be able to hold out? And the claim in Narvik is of utmost importance! Do you understand how I feel? I wonder if it is now time for the combat group to cross into Swedish territory and lay down their arms? General Jodl is in favor of continuing

. Looking back on my time as a soldier, I now realize that it is easier to fight than to bear responsibility for the fight. Come on, Giesler, let's pace up and down until we get new reports*.

New reports kept coming in: very heavy fighting in the Narvik area, fighting in the valleys north and south of Drontheim against English and Norwegian troops.

One question preoccupied Adolf Hitler: where was the Norwegian king, had they managed to capture him?

Then came the decision: perseverance and determination led to success. The king, who had been with his troops in the north of the country, offered to surrender. He had probably realized that further resistance by his troops was pointless. The German troops had prevailed. The fighting with the Anglo-French expeditionary force continued, but the success of this daring Norwegian operation was assured.

No, there was no victory celebration, but there was a great sigh of relief, pride in the achievements of the troops, and recognition of the perseverance of the generals: Jodl in the leadership, Dietl in the battle for Narvik. But then Adolf Hitler turned his attention to a new, burdensome responsibility, the fight against the West:

Giesler, we were only a few hours ahead of the British! This would have posed a dangerous threat to German territory from the north.

With Adolf Hitler in Paris

Since the beginning of the war, my colleagues, architects, engineers, and I had been entrusted with the planning and construction management of armament facilities. On

June 23, 1940, I was on my way to the "Wespe" construction site. In the morning, a gendarmerie post stopped me near Wiener Neustadt and instructed me to drive to Vienna Airport. The courier plane, a Ju 52 equipped for cargo transport, flew to a field airfield in the southern part of Belgium. An off-road vehicle took me to a small village with a few modest houses: Bruly de P2che, north of Sedan—Adolf Hitler's headquarters. A little later, I stood opposite him, wanting to express my admiration and gratitude—

"It's all right, Giesler, you couldn't have known at the time, but I was 386

certain of myself, both in terms of strategic planning, individual tactical measures, and my confidence in the fighting power of the German armed forces. This resulted in the carefully considered timeline. Of course, I remembered that I had invited you to visit Paris with me in the winter. I also invited Speer and Breker. I want to see Paris with my artists. We'll fly there early in the morning. We ate dinner in a simple barracks at two long, primitive tables, together with the military leadership and the adjutants.

When I think back to those evenings in the Bruly de Peche neighborhood, I want to emphasize that there was no triumphant behavior, no loud voices, but rather a solemn dignity. The faces of the leaders and those in charge still showed the tension of the past weeks. Being allowed to sit in their circle seemed to me an undeserved honor. I had come in civilian clothes, but for the trip through Paris I was given a field cap and

a military coat for the trip through Paris, and I blended in as inconspicuously as possible.

At 4 a.m. on June 24, the Führer's plane landed in the darkness at a Paris airport.

Open cars were waiting, including the car of the "boss," as we called Adolf Hitler among ourselves, with Kempka at the wheel. Speer, Breker, and I, along with the SS adjutant and the orderly, had room in his car for the drive through Paris.

Colonel Speidel, who knew Paris as a former military attaché, drove ahead; he was our guide and silent mentor. With the headlights dimmed, we could just the outlines of the streets could be seen. We passed roadblocks with "Guards out" and terse messages; you could sense that the ceasefire was not yet in effect.

Adolf Hitler sat in front of me, and I thought back to the winter evening when he spoke about Paris and his confidence that he would soon see the city. Now his wish was about to come true. But he did not come to Paris as commander-in-chief of the German Armed Forces; he came as the builder of German cities, which he already saw in new forms. He came to compare architectural standards, to experience the character and atmosphere of this city, and he was accompanied by two of his architects and a sculptor, as well as a small military entourage, soldiers who had probably earned the right to see the capital of France with him.

I had the impression that the timing and location of this sightseeing tour had been carefully planned. The first destination was the Imperial Opera House designed by the architect Garnier.

Adolf Hitler said he wanted to see the façade in bright daylight on the way back.

The darkness gave way to the early morning twilight, and we went straight into the brightly lit interior. Although a box attendant went ahead of us, Adolf Hitler led us through this impressive building, pointing out its special features.

pointing out details as he led us through this impressive structure.

It may be that the immediate change from the austere military atmosphere of the Führer's headquarters in the small, barren village of Bruly to the bright, festive grandeur of the former empire raised the standards. I had only seen the façade of this opera house before and was surprised by the clear design of the floor plan and impressed

by the sequence of rooms: from the entrance halls to the spacious staircase and foyers and now, in an excess of gold, the radiant theater room.

We stood in the center box, Adolf Hitler was fascinated: wonderful, uniquely beautiful proportions... and such festivity! If you disregard the pomp and splendor of the Belle Epoque as a product of its time, then despite the architectural eclecticism and a certain baroque excess, what remains is a theater with a special character. Its main merit lies in its beautiful proportions, he repeated. Behind the left proscenium boxes, I would like to see the reception room, the president's salon.

Back and forth. According to Garnier's floor plan, it should be here! said Hitler.

The box attendant was initially at a loss, but then he remembered that this salon had been removed during a renovation. The democratic republic doesn't even allow its president his own reception salon, said Adolf Hitler.

We walked through the magnificent foyers again, stopping at the busts of French luminaries, taking one last look around in appreciation. We returned to the staircase with its elegant rise, in keeping with the flared skirts of the ladies of the imperial era. Then we stepped onto the open staircase into the bright daylight and had our first close-up view of the sculptural façade before continuing on to the Madeleine, which did not seem to impress Adolf Hitler particularly. Now the tour began through the important squares and streets.

At the Place de la Concorde, the car drove slowly in a wide loop around the fountains and the Luxor Obelisk. Adolf Hitler stood in the car, wanting to get an overall view. He looked across the large square, over the Tuileries to the Louvre, then across the Seine to the Chambre des Députés building. At the beginning of the Champs Elysées, he asked the driver to stop and looked at the walls of the Admiralty, into the short street of the

Rue Royal with the gabled end of the Madeleine, which now came into view in this part of the square. Once again, he looked around the square and its architectural boundaries.

Adolf Hitler took his time to take everything in, then, with a brief hand signal, we slowly drove up the gently sloping Champs Elysées to the Etoile with the imposing Arc de Triomphe.

He cast critical glances at the street construction, as far as it was visible through the rows of trees, such as at the Rond Point and the intersecting streets.

Then his concentrated attention turned to the triumphal arch and the spatial and architectural setting of the Etoile. With a glance, he took in the reliefs to the left and right of the high arch (which embody the pathos of the Marseillaise) and the inscriptions carved into it (the French never forget a battle in which they were victorious). He knew every detail from descriptions and illustrations.

Adolf Hitler later told me, combining admiration and criticism: "The lavish expanse of the

Place de la Concorde is impressive, of course, because the square extends to the Tuileries Gardens and the Louvre, and across the deep-bedded Seine to the group of buildings housing the ministries and the Chamber of Deputies... Visually, it also extends to the Madeleine, and then there is the very spacious beginning of the Champs Elysees. On a human scale, it is almost limitless, because although the walls surrounding the square are interesting, they are too weak to provide the necessary support in the urban space of this vast square.

The view from the Concorde was very beautiful, with the fountain and obelisk in the foreground, the Admiralty building, and the Rue Royal with the Madeleine at the end.

Well, I learned a lot, and I constantly compared what I saw with our plans. The gentle, long, and therefore high gradient of the Champs Elysees benefits the Arc de Triomphe, otherwise it would be too small for this important street space in terms of scale—and I think it's too narrow, because the avenues practically rush toward it!

Our layout of the new road axis from the party monument to the new railway station in Munich is correct. He himself had drawn this road profile to scale at the time. Our planned architecture for the street boundaries is sound. He believes that our proposed division of the street by a powerful central reservation gives the street direction, profile, and scale at the same time—something that is lacking in the Champs Elysées, probably the most famous street in the world. The architecture along the street is individually designed, but by no means convincing.

And the Etoile? I asked. Well, you could call the ten or twelve streets or wide avenues that radiate out from it a star – but also the opposite: these twelve rush towards it and tear the spatial framework into bourgeois sections. As long as the ring of trees remained in leaf, it might work, but otherwise the wedge-shaped buildings between the streets would appear too weak. Wasn't that designed by an architect from Cologne?

Yes, I think it was Hittorf, or something like that*.

But back to the drive through Paris. We drove from the Etoile to the

Trocadero. From the large terrace of the Palais de Chaillot, we looked across the Seine at the giant of the 19th century, the Eiffel Tower. Behind it lay the vast Champ de Mars with the Ecole Militaire at its end. This also gave rise to an interesting conversation later on, which I will summarize here. Adolf Hitler told me that he saw the Eiffel Tower not only as the beginning of new architectural standards, but also as the start of a new era of engineering. This tower was not only synonymous with Paris and the time of the World's Fair, but also, albeit not yet in its classic form, the beginning of a new world; he meant the world of technology, with completely different objectives and on a scale never seen before. What would follow, he said, would be wide-span bridges and structures with large vertical dimensions, which could now be built as static structures thanks to precise engineering calculations. But he saw the possibility of creatively designing these structures only through the collaboration of engineers, artists, and architects; for only in this way could the classicism we should strive for be achieved, taking into account a tectonics that corresponded to the new building materials, steel and reinforced concrete, and indeed was inherent to them. I have often thought about this and later had frequent opportunities to learn about Adolf Hitler's thoughts on this "world of technology" in conversations with him, as they corresponded to his ideas and were clearly formulated by him*.

On the rest of the trip across the Seine to the École Militaire, we stopped at the statue of a French general from World War I, with an inscription that was insulting to German soldiers and totally tasteless. Anger flared up; turning to the military escort in the other car that had stopped next to us, Adolf Hitler said, "Have that blown up!"

I believe that, in honor of the then Colonel General Keitel, who was accompanying us, we then visited the Cour d'honneur of the École Militaire. Then came, at least for me, the highlight of the trip.

In the Invalides Cathedral, at the round crypt, Adolf Hitler stood for a long time, serious, with his head bowed, staring down at Napoleon's sarcophagus. I stood to his left; it was no coincidence, he had pulled me over to stand next to him. He said quietly to me: "You will build my tomb, Giesler. We will talk about it later."

Silently and thoughtfully, he left the cathedral, and we all remained a few steps behind him. As we passed through the gate, Adolf Hitler turned around:

"Bormann, I want the Duke of Reichstadt to be transferred to Paris."

After continuing our journey, we made a short stop at a beautiful city palace, the future German embassy, which was modest in size by

small city palace, the future German embassy. Adolf Hitler gave brief instructions for careful renovation with the assistance of French monument preservationists.

Adolf Hitler was very disappointed with the Pantheon on the heights of the Latin Quarter. He walked up to the dome, then abruptly left the building; once outside, he shook his head and breathed a sigh of relief:

"By God, it doesn't deserve this name when you think of the Roman Pantheon, which combines dignity with solemnity in the classicism of its interior with the uniquely beautiful light from the large, open oculus. In contrast, this room here," he pointed back, "is gloomy, more than gloomy, and oppressively dull. And yet it is a bright summer day."

We returned to the car, and several women were visible, shouting, "C'est lui? That's him."

Passing the Sorbonne and Cluny, crossing the Seine to the Ile de la Cité ? driving slowly but without stopping, we saw Notre Dame. There was a brief exchange between Adolf Hitler and Breker about the name and purpose of a building. Adolf Hitler pointed to a building with a dome in front of us; that was the so-called Tribunal of the Chamber of Commerce. Breker disagreed, and since he had spent many years in Paris, he was sure of himself, but as we got closer, it became clear that Adolf Hitler had correctly recognized the building from a distance by its shape and location. On the gable was written "Tribunal de Commerce."

We drove over the Pont d'Arcole bridge over the second arm of the Seine to the square in front of the Hotel de Ville, then to the Rue de Rivoli and on to the Place des Vosges. This square had been designed by Queen Maria de Medici, based on Florentine ideas. But now, because of the dense trees, this original The original design of the space is no longer recognizable. The Place des Vosges did not impress Adolf Hitler. After a quick look at what was still recognizable, we drove on. Back to the Rue de Rivoli:

kilometers of uniform facades, which was appropriate and effective because the Louvre and the adjoining Tuileries Gardens required this closed, calm, and uniform front. This made the interruption all the more surprising: the small square with the monument to Joan of Arc. That was the impression Adolf Hitler had.

We turned off, drove through Rue Castiglione to Place Vendôme with its famous column in the magnificently designed space, then Rue de la Paix to Place de l'Opéra with a clear view of the sculptural, albeit theatrical, façade of the imperial opera house, now bathed in bright light. Adolf Hitler admired this urban design. Certainly, he told me later, very decorative, partly overloaded, of course, in keeping with the expression and sense of style of the time. We will be stricter in our architectural planning, more austere, striving for a classicism that corresponds to our simpler nature. What I saw in Paris compels me to compare it with the achievements of contemporary German architects: Gilly, Schinkel, Klenze, Hansen, and Semper, the architect of the Berlin Opera House.

per, Siccardsburg with the Vienna Opera House... I have the impression that they stand up well. Quite apart from the magnificent achievements and creations of Baroque architects such as Lukas Hildebrandt, Fischer von Erlach, Balthasar Neumann, Prandtauer, and others.

What the Germans lack, he said, is continuity, persistence in their architectural goals; but even in the Middle Ages, in the urban organisms with their cathedrals and minsters, right up to the Baroque buildings of the princes, it was still recognizable in the German-speaking world.

Finally, to our surprise, the trip took us to Montmartre,

Not because of Sacré-Cœur. Adolf Hitler barely glanced at it. No, he wanted to look out from the high terrace in front of the church over the part of Paris whose streets and squares he had just driven through. The view from the plane as it took off was too two-dimensional for him, too much like a map, and he knew it so well that he could draw it. He wanted to get an impression of the three-dimensional effect of the buildings in the urban space, to see how their hierarchy asserted itself in the jumble of bourgeois everyday life, how decisive and orderly these imposing buildings were, how they held their own in the scale in which they were set: Notre Dame and the Arc de Triomphe, the large squares, the major thoroughfares, the Haussmann avenues.

Adolf Hitler then said that, as far as he could see the Paris conurbation from here, the monuments and squares stood out only weakly against the monotony of the residential and functional buildings. Only the grand ensemble stretching from the Louvre to the Etoile, the Ile de France with Notre Dame, and the course of the Seine to the Eiffel Tower could hold its own; and really only this tower, which was designed and built for an exhibition, stood out despite its filigree transparency when viewed from here. And he believed that the tower alone, with its deliberately vertical orientation and its incredible scale for the time, did justice to this city. Of course, it brings something symbolically new to this city with so much historical tradition, from the Romans through the very distinctive age of kings, the Revolution, to the Empire; the buildings of the Republic after Napoleon III are insignificant and not important in the urban fabric, with the exception of the Eiffel Tower.

Adolf Hitler turned to us, to Speer, Breker, and me: "A hard time of work and tension now begins for you, the shaping of the cities and monuments entrusted to you. As far as I am able, as far as I find the time, I will make your work easier! Bormann, help him."

Help me with this, look after my artists, and keep anything away from them that could hinder their work.

And then back to us: Put everything on Bormann's broad shoulders, he will stand by you!

I had no idea how quickly an obstacle that seemed unbelievable could arise for me, one that would involve not only Bormann and Dr. Todt, but also Adolf Hitler himself, and whose repercussions would last for years.

A photo captured this artistic friendship, but I soon realized that even in the best of times it was at best a working relationship and contained a great deal of self-interest, despite all the efforts of Bormann and

Dr. Todt.

We drove to the airport; the sightseeing tour of Paris was over. The plane soon circled over the center of Paris. Adolf Hitler looked down spellbound: What an experience! In its designed core, this city is magnificent!

But the streets and squares were deserted, I interjected, and it was only when the people and traffic returned that Paris came to life, only then did these streets and squares have a purpose – that was how I saw it in 1937 during the World's Fair.

Yes, he could imagine that.

In the early afternoon, we returned to the modest surroundings of the village of Bruly de Peche. News was delivered to Adolf Hitler, who read it standing outdoors. Among the messages was a telegram from the former Emperor Wilhelm II: "What a turn of events by God's providence."

He hadn't come up with anything new, said Adolf Hitler, that was exactly how his grandfather had phrased it in his telegram to the empress. But Wilhelm II had forgotten the faithful commitment to Germany, the perseverance, the unshakable confidence, the efforts to build up the party and the state, and above all the sacrifices that had been necessary to make this divine providence possible.

In the evening, Adolf Hitler paced back and forth with me in front of his lodgings, a small farmhouse. We talked about every detail of the trip through Paris. I have already mentioned some of his impressions and assessments:

The Place Vendôme, with its column, reminiscent of the Roman Trajan's Column and Marcus Aurelius Column – Fischer von Erlach also incorporated it into the design of his idiosyncratic Karlskirche in Vienna – and

it is this very column that gives the street space to widen into a square, with powerful, sculptural, and uniform facades.

I knew immediately what this remark referred to. Adolf Hitler was thus confirming his view of the design of the square, the "Party Column" in Munich, with the beginning of the "Große Straße," that is, with the transition from the "redesign" to the old structure.

In the meantime, he had also explained to me why we had not turned off the Rue de Rivoli and driven to the opera house via the Avenue de l'Opera. If we had done so, we would have had the opera house in front of us for a kilometer as we drove along the axis,

which is why he had me turn later. But on this continuation of the journey, he had gained an impression of the tensions between the uniform facade of the Rue Rue de Rivoli to the Louvre and the Tuileries Gardens. This was now complemented by the experience of the Place Vendôme. The Rue de la Paix then reduced the grand scale, making the opera house with its highly decorative façade all the more impressive and surprising, unmistakably expressing its age and purpose.

Similar to Rome, the historical periods are evident in this city, with each era manifesting itself in its buildings, although the remains of the Roman foundation are certainly only recognizable to archaeologists and historians. But the Middle Ages stand out powerfully: Notre Dame, a monument not only to its time, but also to its most powerful institution, the Church.

The times of worldly power, of kings and nobility, we drove past them this morning, the Louvre and the palaces. The Revolution, ? it first demolished ? the symbol of hated power, the Bastille. The Arc de Triomphe stands symbolically for the empire, for Napoleon I, and for Napoleon III, Haussmann's work and ? strange, the opera house!

Then nothing more? Yes, in his opinion, something decisive: a brilliant engineer designs a gigantic tower, whether it is beautiful or not, it reflected the times. The occasion was significant, firstly the World's Fair, and secondly, it stood for the Revolution.

100 years after 1789, this tower heralded a new era, the era of industrial development. It was a monument to technology, with its own laws and a previously unfamiliar tectonic structure due to the use of steel as a building material, thus setting a new standard. What the tower lacked was classicism, as uniquely embodied in stone in the Doric column. We would talk about this phenomenon many more times. I was fascinated by this brief analysis and interpretation of the Eiffel Tower

as a landmark not only for the city of Paris. But after more than 30 years, I can only convey the meaning, not the fascination that was probably rooted in the events of the day and in the personality itself.

Adolf Hitler was silent for a while, then said quietly: "Actually, the only thing I noticed about the Invalides was Napoleon's sarcophagus in the open circle of the crypt. It strangely captivated me. Everything else was meaningless to me."

After a while, he explained why he wanted his grave in Munich, why I should build it, and how he imagined this grave. This was surprising to me, and yet, as a National Socialist, this connection seemed very meaningful to me. The fact that he was now talking about it on the day of the victorious conclusion of the French campaign

, was certainly triggered by the sight of Napoleon's tomb, but his remarks also suggested that he had been thinking about it for a long time.

We walked silently up and down the narrow forest path. Then Adolf Hitler stopped and said very emphatically: "I want peace... and I will do everything in my power to achieve peace. It is not too late yet. I will go to the limits of what is possible, as far as the sacrifices and dignity of the German nation allow.

I know better than war! Just when I think of the loss of German blood... it is always the best, the bravest and most self-sacrificing who fall, those whose task it would be to embody and lead the nation!

I have no need to make a name for myself through war like Churchill. I want to make a name for myself as the protector of the German people

? I want to secure its unity and its living space, implement National Socialism, and shape the environment. This also includes the formation and redesign of German cities according to modern knowledge. I want people to feel happy in them, and they should also

Be proud of your city, your living space, and your nation. After a while, he continued, peace should be made in Münster, and he had his reasons for this—it would be a historic turning point!

When I returned to Munich, I would have to take the necessary measures for the intensive construction work involved in the redevelopment, including forward-looking planning in all areas of urban development. Like Speer, I would receive a decree from him ordering the immediate start of construction. This would apply in particular to the new main railway station and the motorway ring road, which were prerequisites for the further expansion of the city.

Dr. Todt has been instructed to provide the necessary steel quotas for this. Then he repeated once again: "I want peace!" and changed the subject.

Back then, on November 8, he had been concerned about a strange incident – I had witnessed it firsthand. At the time, he had wondered whether it was just reckless talk and thus a sign of laxity in high military circles, or whether it was treason. Now he was certain that it had been treason. And this treason had been repeated: the date for the "Weser exercise" to secure our northern flank had been communicated to the governments of Denmark and Norway with the exact day and hour... no, listen

the date of the attack on France on May 10 was also betrayed!

May 10! I was dismayed and wanted to ask . . . ? No questions, don't talk about it!

The late dinner took us all to the communal barracks.

together. June 24 came to an end, and the ceasefire began. From various distances in the night came the trumpet signals, "Hold your positions." The windows were open. Adolf Hitler stood alone, turned away from us, his hands clasped together. He gazed into the darkness. When he turned back toward us—long after the signals—he had tears in his eyes.

He said goodbye quietly, with a typical, relaxed movement. As if in a gesture of friendship, he raised his bent arm, his hand open and facing upwards.

War talks

Political War Aims "Wolf's Lair" Winter 1941/42

Reich Minister Dr. Todt had asked me to carry out war-related construction projects in the Baltic States and in the area

Army Group North as part of the Todt Organization. All the staff at my disposal—architects and engineers—and the construction companies' workers and equipment were working in this area from December 1941 to support the supply of troops through railway construction, locomotive defrosting sheds, sidings, and passing tracks.

For a few days, I went to the Führer's headquarters at the Wolf's Lair for meetings. After technical discussions with the officers in charge of army transport, I went to the adjutant's office to report to the Führer. Generals Schmundt and Scherff informed me about the situation at the front. Both emphasized how serious the situation had been in recent weeks.

Winter had struck the hard-fighting troops with elemental force. In the bitter cold, the engines of the tanks and transport vehicles failed, the guns froze solid, and the machine guns and automatic weapons malfunctioned. In icy storms and snow, without winter equipment, without shelter, and with inadequate supplies, the German soldiers fought tenaciously and fiercely against the onslaught of massed winter-hardened divisions, fresh units of the Red Army from the Far East and Siberia.

The front wavered, Russian breakthroughs shook the troops and their leadership. General Schmundt told me that the Führer had been faced with a difficult decision. The attack, which had been conducted with confidence by the troops, turned into a desperate, costly defense that placed the harshest demands on all soldiers. Many commanding generals were in favor of retreating to a much shorter front line. The Führer made the tough decision that the army had to stay put, fight, and only retreat step by step where resistance was no longer possible. where resistance was no longer possible. However, the structure of the front must hold and would hold.

The Führer had not lost his nerve; his powerful manner had been transferred to the troops. The soldiers understood him and recognized that 397

This decision was correct and the order was necessary, for he stood and fought! This saved the Eastern Army, for a retreat would have turned into a rout and led to chaos and destruction.

Today we know that we lacked not only the weeks that the unforeseen Balkan campaign took up, but also the divisions in the east that were stationed in the north, west, and south.

Why was the winter equipment not with the troops on time? I

don't know if it's true, but I heard that the Waffen-SS and the Luftwaffe were equipped, so I asked General Schmundt.

It's bitter, but I don't want to comment on that, although I would have a lot to say.

In any case, winter came unusually early and harshly, but it wasn't just winter equipment that was lacking, there was a general shortage of supplies, including ammunition. There was a lack of powerful divisions when the Russians threw fresh Siberian units onto the front.

I sensed restraint and evasiveness. It was only later that I learned of the circumstances*.

I had the opportunity to talk to General Jodl. He said to

me: "I admired the Führer when he explained his strategy for the Western Front to me, but I admired him even more in recent weeks when he held the faltering Eastern Front with unimaginable energy and willpower, with his faith and his suggestive power, and prevented a catastrophe. He is a leader of extraordinary stature!"

When I reported to Adolf Hitler, I said that it was a satisfaction to me that I could now devote myself entirely to war-related tasks in the Baltic States and in the Army Group North. These tasks would suit me, as I had already served as a pioneer at the front during the World War. But I didn't really get anywhere with that.

Dr. Todt had informed him about the deployment of my construction unit, and he had given his approval. My architects and engineers would have to deploy all available manpower in the Baltic region for the urgently needed railway, bridge, road, and port construction projects in order to secure supplies and relieve the troops. At the same time, my employees, insofar as they were not serving as soldiers in the troops, would remain together as a unit for future peacetime tasks: I expect you to continue with the urban planning as well as the individual planning for Munich and Linz. If you need additional staff, the skilled workers assigned to your construction group are at your disposal. You can therefore call on one or more employees as needed.

You are responsible for managing your construction group's deployment within the framework of the OT.

You will step in when difficulties arise, when negotiations with higher military authorities are necessary, when decisions have to be made. You will now be in my quarters more often and for longer periods of time, which suits me perfectly. The courier planes are at your disposal, and you can reach your operations managers by telephone from here at any time.

Certainly, this assignment means additional work for you. But, Giesler, don't take away my opportunity to spend a few hours now and then on the tasks that I consider so important and that are close to my heart. Don't take away the only joy I have left: working on the peace tasks of the future!

In conversations after the evening military briefings, Adolf Hitler spoke about questions concerning the fate of Europe. I found it particularly interesting to experience the conviction with which he presented his visionary views. He considered it essential to overcome national rigidity, because only in a union could a vibrant future for Europe be guaranteed. The threat from the East alone, with the danger of a Bolshevik-Asian leveling that would mean the destruction of all the foundations of Western culture, compelled unity. But so far, every nation thought only of itself and not in a European context: That must be our goal, the Germanic social revolution with which we will overcome Marxism!

This would inevitably lead to a confederation of Germanic states, ? not too narrowly defined, but with wise limitations, because England, for example, is not European-oriented, but world-oriented: we have had to experience that!

The Mediterranean states would also remain outside this desired Germanic confederation, yet still feel part of this new European bloc.

Volunteer associations are already forming that give hope for this European, Germanic confederation:

To put it another way, the swastika flag still stands above us as a national symbol, but one day it will become a Germanic symbol and Germany will be like a magnetic force field. This force field will attract and win over all those who feel its influence.

The conviction must and will arise: we belong together, despite our national ties and centuries of separation, nothing prevents us from remaining Danes, Dutch, Walloons, Flemings, or Norwegians.

A parallel can be drawn with the process that became a historical fact under Bismarck, when the separate states of Prussia, Bavaria, and Württemberg formed the unity of the empire.

Powerful historical new orders always emerged from struggles and wars

or – and we must always be aware of this danger – chaotic disorder, fragmentation, division of the body politic, degeneration of nations, stagnation, loss, or decline. This was achieved through the Thirty Years' War with the Peace of Münster and Osnabrück, but also in the Seven Years' War, which, thanks to the steadfastness of the great king, established Prussia's military and spiritual leadership. The "War of Liberation" was directed against the hegemony of France under Napoleon, which had led to a reactionary stagnation of the nations. The wars of 1866 and 1870/71, in turn, led to the unity of the empire. We must also remember the World War, which, after a costly struggle, plunged Germany and Austria into chaos through the dictates of Versailles and St. Germain.

We must therefore always be aware of what this war means. It is not only being fought for the survival and living space of Germany; rather, we are defending the West against Bolshevism, which, according to Lenin's prophecy, is to spread across Europe with the help of Asia.

When asked, Adolf Hitler replied that no, he was not thinking of Moscow; that area would be excluded. What he considered necessary was protect Europe's flanks via the Baltic and Black Seas. Something like the Limes of the Roman Empire would have to be created in between, a European eastern wall with fortifications, within which the new European settlements* would be protected. He saw this eastern wall as being connected to a no man's land occupied by Germanic troops. It would be a huge, contiguous military training area that would render all facilities in the former Germanic living space superfluous; these would then be returned to cultural and forest landscapes. But before any cultural achievements could be made, the struggle for our very existence must be won.

Concerns? Führer Headquarters, Winniza,
late summer/fall 1942

Martin Bormann called me from the Führer's headquarters in Winniza and ordered me to come to headquarters immediately: Party comrade Giesler, you are urgently needed here. Bring all the Linz plans and be prepared to stay for several weeks. Hurry, please!

A little later, Field Marshal Keitel called and asked me to bring my architectural plans to the Führer's headquarters as soon as possible. Then an adjutant got on the line and told me which courier plane I could take from Berlin.

I was already alerted by Bormann's greeting, but even more so by Field Marshal Keitel's unusual request.

When I reported to Adolf Hitler in Winniza, I found him changed. After serious disagreements with his generals, he had turned away from his usual personal interactions with them. He no longer took part in the customary joint lunches and dinners. After the "situation meetings," he withdrew. He did not discuss his motives with me at first. Bormann also remained silent, saying only that Adolf Hitler had expressed a desire to talk to me about the Linz plans, as far as his military duties allowed. Only dealing with urban planning issues and architectural plans could relax him.

Strange, Field Marshal Keitel, who was concerned about his boss, had come to the same conclusion: Giesler could contribute to easing the tension with his plans. During my stay at the FHQu Winniza, I was usually Adolf Hitler's only guest. We ate together and I spent the long evenings and nights with him in serious conversation, not only about architectural plans. We often drew together and discussed construction details until the early hours of the morning. Adolf Hitler did not go to bed until he had received the latest reports from the front lines; he also wanted to be informed about the effects of nighttime air raids.

Exhausted from the strain of varied conversations, I sought out my quarters in the log cabin, noticing as I passed that Bormann was still busy. Once we met in front of my cabin: "Dear Professor, please rest now. Surely you have realized how necessary you are here!"

At the time of the military "midday situation," I often went outside the blockade with my friend Karl Brandt, Adolf Hitler's surgeon and personal physician, the restricted area through the bright sunflower fields of Ukraine. We exchanged greetings with the unspoiled population.

Remnants of the Ostrogoths had survived there, said Karl Brandt, and the chief agreed. He attributed the blooming, vigorous figures of the women and girls to farm work and a natural diet. "By the way, did you also notice that the boss's face has changed? His chin and mouth have become harder, his forehead is more pronounced, more strongly modeled, especially above the eyes. Worry and willpower are more apparent. Has he already spoken to you about his concerns? I'm curious to hear what he will say to you."

During dinner, I talked about the impressions I had gained during my walk through the countryside. I took advantage of the conversation with Karl Brandt and his reference to the Ukrainian population.

Yes, as far as he could judge, it confirmed his impression of the national character.

worthwhile, some of them magnificent people. He noticed this in the women and girls, and in the children in general; they not only looked healthy, they were also full of vitality. Simple and clean, accustomed to hard field work, they did not nibble on sweets, where would they get them? Instead, they nibbled on sunflower seeds. Here and there, one could see something in their facial features that was reminiscent of the Ostrogoths. Of course, this was an intuitive perception and could not be explained. But at the same time, their mostly broad faces reflected the vastness of the space and their connection to the land. After all, the territory of present-day Ukraine once belonged to the great empire of the Ostrogoths, and he would endeavor to obtain information and insights.

After the military "evening briefing," we were back to planning the development of the Danube riverbank in Linz. Adolf Hitler first spoke about his ideas for the Linz city hall. He had decided on the location on the Urfahr side, upstream from the Nibelungen Bridge.

The representation of the city of Linz should not be the task of the Gauleiter of Oberdonau, but of the mayor, as in Hamburg or Bremen. That is why we were now planning the city hall. It was to become the pride of the citizens of Linz.

He developed his ideas with incredible imagination and attention to detail. It was clear from everything he said that he had a thorough knowledge of buildings that had been used for similar purposes; he went far back into the past and highlighted the special features of the buildings. He spoke of the Roman Capitol, the Senatorial Palace, the Palazzo Venezia, the Quirinal, and the Doge's Palace in Venice. He referred to this in one page of his explanations, then went on to mention the imperial palaces, the buildings of the Staufer dynasty in Apulia, the Rempster in Marienburg, and the Flemish town houses. He spoke about the Gürzenich in Cologne, of course.

He also mentioned Elias Hon's town hall in Augsburg, saying that it was also a town house, without files or clerks.

And then Adolf Hitler described the Stockholm townhouse designed by architect Ragnar Ostberg as a magnificent achievement, a work shaped by tradition and the unique nature of the location with masterful architectural skill. He particularly praised the tower and the so-called "Blue Hall."

When we were alone again after evening tea, he gave me a shocking account of his situation:

Giesler, I want to talk to you about my concerns, it will remain confidential. I live and work under the oppressive certainty that I am surrounded by betrayal! Who can I still trust completely, and how can I make decisions, give orders, how can I lead convincingly when deception, false reports, and obvious betrayal create mistrust

arises and justified caution leads to uncertainty, when I have been mistrusted from the very beginning?

I looked at him speechless, my face probably showing my shock.

But that's how it is: it starts with false reports and ends in outright sabotage. Clearly formulated orders are not carried out or fail due to stubbornness and lead to nonsense. Here and there I can intervene and identify those responsible, who then come up with all sorts of excuses, some of them undignified, such as: "But the situation required it," "I understood it differently," "Everything looks different on the front line."

If I confront them when they don't follow my orders, when they give me incorrect or incomplete information, or make excuses, they strike their heels together indignantly and say, "I request my discharge!" Just like that? "I reserve the right to tell you when I will dispense with your services... A soldier at the front cannot say, 'It doesn't suit me, I'm going home'—that is my answer.

Before the Russian campaign, I thought through the strategic options just as carefully, including the tactical implementation, as I did at the time with the attack to the west. Of course, there was greater uncertainty in the east, if only because we were poorly informed about the strength and fighting power of the Russians. It is now pointless to dwell on this. But after the terrible, desperate fighting in the winter, when we narrowly avoided disaster, I considered all offensive moves with the utmost care and reviewed every detail.

Nevertheless, everything goes wrong, or should I say, "something is amiss!" This is not just a matter of acting on one's own authority or deviating from orders. In this extensive theater of operations, such actions may be necessary when the situation demands it. However, acting on one's own authority must lead to success. The general who disregards my orders must have what the Great Frederick called "fortune."

His bitterness erupted over a trifle: instead of fighting their way through the road, as I had ordered, to push into the southern Caucasus, they climbed Mount Elbrus to plant a flag there!

Well, I knew the 'conqueror of Elbrus', an enthusiastic mountaineer, the Sonthofen mountain infantry major Groth, a district judge in civilian life. I remained silent at first, but later I said that this mountaineering expedition had had a great propaganda effect, that the whole Allgäu region was proud of Major Groth and his mountain infantrymen.

Crazy mountaineers at best, there's an order, a precise, interlocking schedule, and instead they climb some idiotic glacier. They should have chosen Suchum instead of Elbrus. I consider any further comment on this matter superfluous.

It is not easy to say: in addition to the arbitrariness and betrayal that I feel, even if I cannot grasp it, there is also the lie... yes, I am being lied to! I therefore felt compelled to call in stenographers to record every word of the reports and messages and every order I give!

I am parting ways with Chief of Staff Halder. It is simply no longer possible. I must remain true to myself. When I look at him, I see hatred and arrogance that is not based on above-average intellectual capacity. It gets worse! When I said earlier that I feel surrounded by betrayal, I am not referring to intelligence agents working for the enemy, nor to professional spies or those motivated by political opposition. I am not referring to crooks or traitors to the country.

surrounded by betrayal, I don't mean the enemy's intelligence agents, not the spies who are professionals or politically motivated, nor do I mean the crooks and traitors who can be identified, tracked down, and arrested—you always have to expect them.

No, the betrayal runs deeper, it is intangible, and I cannot fight it. Who could be capable of this? Whether it concerns fundamental questions of strategy that were discussed or individual tactical details that I ordered, the enemy already knows about it, as I later find out!

Who should I suspect? I change my young SS adjutants, but what good does that do? Should I extend my mistrust to the participants in the "situation meetings"? An impossible situation! Or are the traitors sitting at the junctures where the orders are transmitted? In any case, these are officers, perhaps even high-ranking officers!

But that's not possible, it can't be...!

Oh, Giesler, listen, just a small, simple example, that's why I was able to explain it fully, just a small example.

You know the situation of Army Group North, it's your section, where your engineers and workers are involved in the planned redesign of the cities with pioneering work. Now that everything has gone completely wrong, I can speak openly about this military mess

. I must remain silent about other incidents. So, the

18th Army was supposed to launch an attack in a northeasterly direction to cut Leningrad off from Lake Ladoga via Oranienbaum. This was not only strategic, but more importantly, it was necessary for political reasons. I had already determined this northern direction of attack at the beginning of the offensive in 1941, but it was not adhered to or implemented, as I now believe, out of stubbornness, no, not because of the "early winter," but more on that later!

Who could I now entrust with the leadership of this offensive thrust? Colonel General von Manstein, who had just conquered Kerch and Sevastopol so successfully with brave divisions, was suitable.

I discussed the breakthrough east of Leningrad with him in detail and told him what was important to me: establishing contact with the Finnish front, cutting off Russian forces in the Leningrad and Oranienbaum area from their supplies, thereby shortening the front and, above all, pacifying the Baltic Sea region and relieving the supply routes.

The leaders of the army group, and certainly not those of the 18th Army, were not suited to the task of carrying out the operation successfully. Manstein was the right man for the job, as his name and his army were associated with the glory of Crimea and Sevastopol.

From the outset, my concern was to secure the right flank, the section from Lake Ilmen to the north, the Volkhov front. The attack had to succeed, and securing the flank was a prerequisite for this.

I took all the necessary measures in good time. I marked the minefields on the maps of the front sections, divisions, regiments, and battalions, along with the interlocking positions, supported the defensive capabilities by assigning heavy weapons, stationary tanks, and built-in gun emplacements, and then transferred all the measures I had ordered to the enlarged aerial photographs and maps I had at my disposal. I requested and received interim reports and finally received the overall report of completion. I breathed a sigh of relief; Manstein's attack army was already gathering in the combat zone. Then, on August 27, the Russian offensive began on the Volkhov.

Parts of the 18th Army, which I believed to be secure, were overrun. The Russians deployed over 20 divisions, plus five tank brigades—it was alarming!

Of course, the Russians knew about the troop movements of Manstein's attacking army, but that they got ahead of us and surprised us with such a massive attack, right in the front section that I was so worried about... strange! The Russians overran Gaitolovo and advanced almost to Mga.

So they had early knowledge of our strategic plan, which means that before our troop movements even began, the Russians managed to concentrate their forces for a counterattack. How could this Russian intention to attack remain hidden from us? And now pay attention, Giesler: How did these Russian divisions get across the minefields, how did they break through our fortified positions secured with tanks and defensive weapons?

At first, it was a mystery to me.

I felt compelled to order Manstein to immediately deploy the forces available for the Leningrad operation to the Volkhov front in a defensive and at the same time offensive manner in order to avoid a catastrophe... Since then, fierce fighting has been going on there. The situation is by no means stable.

All forces that were to be used for the offensive east of Leningrad are now tied up at Volkhov. It is no longer possible to carry out this strategically necessary operation.

Whether it was treason or not, we will leave open. But now to the facts that I was able to ascertain: How did the Russian divisions get through the barricades, across the extensive minefields, how did they overcome tanks and defensive weapons? As incredible as it sounds, there were none; they only existed in the reports of the 18th Army and the Army Group! I investigated and received mendacious excuses! I had no choice but to summon the officers of the Volkhov Front who were directly involved in the fighting, as far as I could reach them, the regiment, battalion, and company commanders. I questioned them thoroughly, talked to them, showed them the maps with the minefields, the roadblocks, and so on marked on them. All the officers I questioned said the same thing: the minefields, roadblocks, and tanks were only on paper, my orders and commands had not been carried out, the reports of their execution were lies! Giesler, this is not an isolated case!

barriers and tanks were only on paper, my orders and commands had not been carried out, the reports of their execution were lies! Giesler, this is not an isolated case! ? That's enough for today!

The next morning, I spoke about this with the head of the Wehrmacht adjutancy, General Schmundt. He confirmed this to me; using a general staff map, he explained the situation on the Volkhov front to me. General Zeitzler became the new chief of the general staff, a temperamental soldier. The adjutants aptly characterized him as the "ball of lightning."

The open nature of the new chief of the General Staff contrasted with the closed, dismissive attitude of General Halder.

Late one afternoon, Adolf Hitler allowed himself another hour of relaxation. We drew together on the map table over the plans for Linz. I wanted to clarify a few details concerning his retirement home on the rocky plateau above the Danube. He said he liked my idea of developing his house from the cubic Upper Austrian farmhouse, the Vierkanter, with four protruding bay windows offering views of the city and the countryside, especially the Danube and the new development on the riverbank. The desired closed form had something of the design power and clarity of Frederick II's precious Castel del Monte.

By the way, Giesler, remember the painting that the Weimar painter, what's his name again, Gugg? commissioned for me, Castel del Monte, the crown of Apulia? Find out how far along the painting is.

He saw it at the last art exhibition in Munich and was thrilled. We discussed further details of his house: The basic layout is more or less clear and distinct as far as my rooms are concerned, the large hall with the terrace, flanked by bay windows. The perfect room for a round table like the one I would like to have. As my architect, you are part of it.

I tried to hear his views on further details, such as the business section, the garden, and the protective arbor leading to the tea pavilion.

No, said Adolf Hitler, that's a matter for Miss Braun. Discuss all these questions with her first; she will be the lady of the house. Because when I have appointed my successor and stepped down, I will marry Miss Braun.

Soon after, we were interrupted by the orderly announcing the arrival of the surgeon, Professor Dr. Sauerbruch. Adolf Hitler gave a hand signal and asked me to stay, so I witnessed the conversation. First, there was a friendly greeting, then: "Thank you very much, dear Professor, for agreeing to my request.

As a world-renowned and widely respected physician and surgeon, you are also the best representative and ambassador of the nation. That is why the task you are willing to take on is of such special importance. I will do everything I can to support you. My pilot and my plane are at your disposal. It goes without saying that your assistant physicians, the anesthesiologist, and the surgical nurses will accompany you. Everything will be done to support your efforts. I have informed the ambassador in Ankara accordingly. If you believe that this will make your doctors and nurses happy, then interrupt your return flight in Athens; the Acropolis must surely be of interest to all followers of Aesculapius. I wish you every success with your intuitive insight.

Adolf Hitler said goodbye and turned back to our work.

He gave me a brief explanation: This is a high-ranking Turkish official who is important in our tense situation.

In the evening, during the military situation, I was invited to a drink. The center of attention was Professor Dr. Sauerbruch, surrounded by the highest-ranking military medics. The mood among the disciples of Aesculapius was very elevated, as Jozef Faser would have put it, "well, they were also looked after by Julius Schaub, with a cunning look on his face.

Sauerbruch was ranting and raving, I really can't describe it any other way, with a tired mouth and a high alcohol level, about his upcoming mission to Turkey:

"And how the Führer treated me, what an amazing personality, I'm getting his machine and everything else I think I need, he told me so himself... he knows exactly what I'm worth to him!"

Tears came to his eyes, no, it was schnapps running from his eyes.

He wiped his eyes, then said, "Who's that over there? I've seen him before!" He pointed at me. Of course he had, just that afternoon, but I was still amazed at his ability to "recognize" people intuitively.

He was in such a good mood that he would have removed our appendixes for free.

I thought of my evening mission and slipped away.

Exactly ten years later, in the fall of 1952, I read Landsberg Sauerbruch's book "Das war mein Leben" (That Was My Life) in the War Crimes Prison. First in a magazine, then as a book (170,000 copies were printed at the time), the privy councilor served up descriptions of his profound surgical art and serious medical science garnished with chatty untruths.

He describes his visit to the Führer's headquarters in Winniza and everything he had to endure during his meeting with Adolf Hitler. Well, I had witnessed this encounter and conversation attentively and with interest at the time, if only because the name "Sauerbruch" was a household name.

According to Sauerbruch, the Führer's headquarters in Winniza was "30 meters underground." But he was drunk by the evening, so until then the FHQu must have consisted of wooden houses, log cabins, and barracks for him too!

A general "hissed" at him, he's not sure who it was; it can only have been the polite, amiable General Schmundt, the chief adjutant of the Wehrmacht.

"Take off your belt, no one is allowed to come to the Führer with a weapon!" "But Herr Geheimrat, that was only introduced after the assassination attempt on July 20, 1944!"

"Sixteen generals" could not be received because the Privy Councilor was late. The military situation had long since passed; we had been planning and drawing for over an hour when the Privy Councilor was announced.

When Sauerbruch entered the large, elegantly furnished room, a huge dog "shot" at him with barking and bared teeth, "at his chest,"

its muzzle on his neck. It was Blondi, the sheepdog, who lay quietly on her blanket with her muzzle between her paws, only occasionally pricking up her ears. All of Hitler's rooms in Winniza were spartanly furnished.

But by then, Sauerbruch, who was a dog expert, had calmed Blondi down, and the dog even "smiled" at him "friendly," as he wrote, "then Hitler entered." I saw it differently: the orderly opened the door and Sauerbruch entered.

Hitler entered." I saw it differently: the orderly opened the door and Sauerbruch stepped inside.

"The scene that followed was the most terrifying I have ever witnessed," writes the privy councilor. I was standing in the same room and witnessed the polite and friendly greeting.

"His eyes flashed with rage, he clenched both fists, rushed toward me" (Hitler, of course, not Blondi), and shouted, "What have you done to my dog?" The Privy Councilor and the dog had nothing to do with each other.

"Then Hitler raised a wild cry of rage. 'I'll have the dog shot!'"

Then, in a "shrill high-pitched voice" that must have penetrated "the entire underground vault" (of the wooden house!), he shouted, "I'll give you this mutt!" "I will have you arrested!" And so the secret councilor's account continues.

The Privy Councilor notes: "I was somewhat stunned," and so was I when I read all this!

During a tour of the prison yard in Landsberg, I asked the internist and researcher Professor Dr. Beiglböck, a cultured, humorous Viennese: "What do you think of Sauerbruch?"

A grandiose braggart, he said ambiguously, with a subtle smile.

Then I spoke to the head of the military doctors, Colonel General Professor Dr. Handloser. Of course, he had read Sauerbruch's memoirs. His counter-question was: "Why are you asking me about Sauerbruch's description of Winniza?"

Well, I was there most of the time, from the beginning to almost the drunken end, first with the boss and his dog in the vault, "30 meters below the surface of the earth," and then at the drinking party or symposium, as you medics call it! Oh, it was you! I've been wondering all these years here in Landsberg where I knew you from.

Well, dear Dr. Handloser, then Sauerbruch was superior to you in "intuitive recognition," because he asked himself that question after only a few hours. "So we're back to square one," said Dr. Handloser. I believe the medical and surgical sections of the book are by Sauerbruch, everything else is by his interviewer, who writes in the style of the time.

I see it somewhat differently: there may well have been a hack writer involved, but he would never have put such detailed fantasies on paper without being authorized by Mr. Sauerbruch. I thought that doctors were bound by the principle of truthfulness and felt at least some obligation to Paracelsus.

Dr. Handloser, an ascetic man of good bearing and tolerance, concluded: "Just ignore the nonsense that was undoubtedly inserted by someone else, because Sauerbruch was a great doctor and a fantastic guy."

Well, I had no doubts about his surgical skills or his imaginative efforts to give his book a contemporary flavor. The "Sauerbruch audience in Winniza" may stand for many things, but it is symptomatic.

Campaigns

Adolf Hitler planning the Western offensive*

It was a large map book bound in leather: "The France Field Campaign in Chronological Order." One day, it was lying on Adolf Hitler's desk. According to the Wehrmacht adjutant's office, this work had been compiled

Zug in seinem zeitlichen Ablauf" (The French Campaign in its Chronological Sequence). One day it lay on Adolf Hitler's desk. As I was told by the Wehrmacht adjutant's office, this work had been compiled as a military history document and the first copy had now been handed over to Adolf Hitler in Winniza.

As a preamble to his consideration of the events that had taken the world by surprise, Adolf Hitler explained to me that even before the conclusion of the Polish campaign,

he had demanded that the Chief of the General Staff submit strategic plans for an offensive in the West: Firstly, I did not trust the peace; secondly, an attack in the West had to be thought through and prepared in every detail; and finally, time was the most important factor. We were and are constantly under time pressure; time is a powerful ally of the enemy, more relentless than the past winter with its premature snow, ice, and bitter cold. Thoughtfully, he added:

From my youth, as if in a premonition, I disliked both snow and ice. I told you long before the campaign in France that the Chief of the General Staff presented me with the rehashed Schlieffen Plan at the end of September 1939, but I did not tell you how this happened in detail—I mean the arrogance of the presentation for a hollow nothing, for repetitions of the thoughts of the honorable General Schlieffen, which were already outdated in the 19th century and completely ignored the possibilities of modern weapons, tanks, and the air force! Adolf Hitler remained silent in his recollection. After a while: "I have always been afraid of the North Sea.

19th century and completely ignored the possibilities offered by modern weapons, tanks, and the air force"! Adolf Hitler remained silent as he recalled the events.

After a while, he said:

I looked at the Chief of the General Staff and came to the conclusion that any further words or even a critical analysis would lead to nothing, would be pointless; he is completely incapable of thinking in all dimensions... but he is convinced that he is a unique military talent. He lacks ideas, imagination, vision, daring, and above all the charisma that characterizes a leading soldier.

But how much time was left to change this 'Schlieffen strategy' and these meticulously compiled tactical plans with fundamentally new offensive ideas? In such a short time, the only option was to reinforce the forces in the area around Luxembourg with tank units 410

and motorized divisions, thereby giving this section of the attack more the character of a thrust toward Neufchâteau and Sedan. There was no time for more.

I ordered the attack for mid-November 1939. Then came this mysterious betrayal of the planned attack date. I was informed of the discovery in your studio on November 8, and I immediately withdrew the attack order. It was not easy; we lost time. But on the other hand, the assassination attempt against me failed, and the decision to abandon the attack date was subsequently confirmed by the extremely unfavorable weather conditions.

The traitor has not yet been identified; he holds a high military position, under cover. So far, all attack dates have been betrayed!

What hatred of me and National Socialism lies behind this disgusting, cowardly betrayal? German soldiers are being sacrificed without hesitation. A decision in the West was no longer possible in 1939. We lost time, valuable time, but I used this time to study the strategy of the French campaign in detail and to carefully consider the tactical details that would result from it.

strategies for the campaign in France and carefully consider the resulting tactical details.

Adolf Hitler went with me to the map collection and opened the volume. The first page was an overview map of the area from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, with the military forces as of September 1939 marked on it.

I now considered the strategic possibilities myself, alone and with complete restraint.

My idea was: If I pretend that I am going to attack according to Schlieffen and thus thoroughly deceive them... with a movement of his hand, he outlined an area... and launch an energetic attack here, where they would not expect it at all... his index finger pointed firmly at Sedan... what would be the consequence? Slowly, my ideas took shape, I could see the course of this surprise attack, everything was coming together. But I was still cautious and didn't talk to anyone about my thoughts.

I requested all the documents and examined them thoroughly. I studied with the Maginot fortifications, as far as they were known to us and marked on the General Staff maps. Then I had relief maps brought to me, aerial photographs, but not very one-sided, not only related to the sections of my planned attack. I continued to study the entire road system, its traffic volume, and examined the possibilities for camouflaged deployments.

Slowly, I became confident, and now I obliged my Wehrmacht adjutants to maintain absolute secrecy so that they could assist me. Slowly, I gained the conviction that was essential for

feel secure: this was the only way!

In December 1939, the plan of attack had now been transformed from an idea into a real plan. A grand strategy is not only ahead of its time in terms of intellectual level

, it also has its own laws, and like urban planning and architecture,

I am almost tempted to say it is a work of art!

If this strategy is to be a complete success, if it is to be implemented, then it can only be through the logical interlocking of all individual tactical measures, which in turn must be well thought out and carefully planned. They must fit in completely with the grand strategic idea and be subordinate to it; they are both the foundation and the structure. Of course, safety precautions must be planned to deal with all possible imponderables. What is also needed is a sudden, surprising move to achieve the big goal.

I now had to deal with the details and the appropriate tactics for each attack; I took my time and did it thoroughly. From the maps, we moved on to deliberations and experiments in the sandbox. I still kept the circle of initiates small, and according to my later findings, my caution was absolutely justified. By the beginning of January 1940, this strategy had been substantiated by all the individual tactical plans.

Now I took Keitel and Jodl into my confidence, ? no, I won them over

They immediately rejected my plan, raising objections such as: Wouldn't it be better to bypass the Maginot Line to the north? "That's exactly what the enemy is expecting, what they're preparing for!" I told them. My attack plans were too bold, too risky for them.

Of course, it was a risk, because not only was the frontal assault in danger, but also its flanks from the south, west, and even from the east, if the divisions following behind did not secure the breached area in time. They did not make it easy for me to get my way.

The Maginot Line's barrier? Well, I was sure of that. The Czech barrier forts, which had been directed against us at the time and were built by French engineers

in the style of the Maginot bunkers, not only did I examine them closely, they were also suitable objects on which I had firing tests carried out. The result was as I expected: the bunkers were completely destroyed by direct fire from 8.8 special grenades. I would also be able to take them out or hold them down with Stuka missions.

Around mid-February, as usual, the newly appointed commanding generals reported for duty, including Manstein. Schmundt had brought him to my attention, pointing out that he had almost the same views on the strategy for the Western campaign. After reporting for duty, I gave Manstein the opportunity to present his thoughts on the Western offensive. Yes, it was just as Schmundt had told me.

Manstein was the only general who had arrived at the same operational approach, which confirmed my view. Nevertheless, I remained silent—the fewer people who knew about it, the more surprising the blow would be. It would also have been wrong to tell him how far above the actual

strategic concept, the tactical details had already been worked out."

Adolf Hitler had turned over map after map during the months of the "drôle de guerre" until May 1940 while he spoke. Now the preparations for the attack were evident from the notes on the map:

I do not want to go into all the tactical details now, such as the rapid capture of the crossings, bridges, and barriers. Where they were close to the border, I deployed shock troops, some of them on wheels, so that they could take enemy positions by surprise quickly and silently. The capture of the well-fortified, modern Eben Emael barrier fort was significant. It could only be taken without heavy losses by a surprise raid and only in a coordinated attack from the air and from the front. Cargo gliders were to land silently on the fort and drop off the pioneer shock troops. Aircraft with paratroopers and cargo gliders with shock troops were deployed as tactical considerations dictated. Airports were captured behind enemy lines in this manner as far as possible.

Believe me, Giesler, I have discussed all these tactical attacks on a model and rehearsed them with the officers and non-commissioned officers of the air force, engineers, paratroopers, and infantrymen, and we were completely successful! Adolf Hitler turned over the next card; it showed the attack on the morning of May 10 with the targets for the first day of the attack marked on it. This was followed by a series of cards showing the individual sections of the divisions, followed by a second series of cards with the successes of the individual tank and combat units marked on them.

Then, drawn on a larger scale, the fierce fighting around Sedan became visible. Was this the energetic thrust that the enemy had not expected? This was followed by the breakthrough and advance of the tanks, secured on the flanks by the divisions pushing forward. Now map after map followed, often two for one day, providing a graphic account of the successes of the tank advance along the eastern side of the Somme toward Abbeville: My greatest concern was securing the flanks; counterattacks from the south and southwest, if vigorously conducted, could have developed into a threatening situation. At the same time, the "Schlieffen attack" had to be carried out seriously in order to draw the enemy's main forces, the motorized units, into the Belgian area. The deception succeeded, and the bulk of the enemy forces ran into these battle areas as I had imagined, and were cut off. The frontal assault by our divisions was also completely successful and forced Holland and Belgium to surrender. The operation, later called "Sichelschnitt" (sickle cut), was a decisive success. But the complete defeat of the Western Allies had not yet been achieved.

The enemy had been decisively defeated in the northern sector. Pressed from the east and south by our rapidly advancing troops and cut off to the west, their only escape route was the sea. The bulk of these mainly British forces gathered around Dunkirk, in the Flemish plain, which I remembered well from the World War. Oh, I know that it is not only the circle of the oh-so-clever General Staff who regard my decision to go to Dunkirk as a great mistake!

These know-it-alls and those with such Christian sentiments believe that it was my greatest stupidity not to have completely destroyed the defeated English at Dunkirk. Various considerations prevented me from destroying them.

First, the military reasons. The Flemish lowlands essentially restrict the use of tanks to roadways. This meant that protracted fighting with casualties and possibly high tank losses were to be expected. However, I could not do without tanks for the operations that were still necessary

westward and southward, into France proper, I could not do without tanks. Above all, however, we could not afford to spread our forces too thin

spread ourselves too thin and lose time. The enemy was in shock, and now everything had to happen quickly.

After hearing Rundstedt, my closest military advisors also shared this view; it was imperative to continue the attack westward and southward without delay before the enemy could build up strong defenses on the Somme and Aisne*. Our subsequent assault met with fierce resistance there. It was also to be expected that the British would deploy further troops across the Channel with artillery support from their warships,

after all, they couldn't abandon France like they had abandoned Poland! But they did!

We had to attack in the west; Paris and northern France had to be taken very quickly to prevent the British from landing new troops. We had to go on the offensive in the south, breaking through the French fortifications, forcing a final decision and thus bringing the campaign in France to a swift conclusion; for there was another reason, of a military-political nature. I did not remain one-sided in my thinking: I had long been listening anxiously to the east! Was there not now, however slight, a vague possibility of peace, which I would have ruined by the cold-blooded annihilation of the English army at Dunkirk?

Adolf Hitler, as it now turned out, calculated with reason, as he had often done in previous years. He did not think only as a German, he thought as a European. In truth, he thought in terms of a higher humanity, which he wanted to see realized in ethnically based communities.

In my view, there was proof that he had valued the possibility of peace more highly: on June 24, 1940, he ordered the peace tasks to be carried out at the Bruly de P8che headquarters, and with his decree of June 25, he gave Speer and me the authority to begin the redesign of German cities. Later, I was reminded once again of the "mistake of Dunkirk."

If I remember correctly, it was in August 1943, after the terrible air raids on Hamburg. Adolf Hitler was giving instructions to an adjutant in the next room. There was a pile of photographs on a wall table, and I picked them up. They were horrific evidence of the effects of the hail of bombs and phosphorus on women and children during these terrible terrorist attacks on Hamburg, which claimed over forty thousand civilian lives.

When Adolf Hitler returned to the workroom, he saw the photographs in my hand. In a quiet but insistent tone, he said:

"Leave that, Giesler, don't look at those pictures!" And after a while: "I've had to rethink things. It's not in my nature to kick someone when they're down. I was wrong. Magnanimity is

not appreciated. They are repaying my mercy in Dunkirk with bombs and phosphorus on the women and children whose husbands and fathers are fighting for Europe. What we see there is a brutal will to destroy—he pointed to the photographs—one is tempted again and again not to believe it, but now I know no mercy!

For me, these statements were proof that, apart from military and political reasons, ethical considerations also played a role in his decision at the time.

But back to the fall of 1942 in Winniza. Agitated and pensive, I arrived at my quarters late at night or early in the morning. I couldn't sleep. After Adolf Hitler's statements, I now had an explanation

for his mistrust and dismissive behavior toward the generals. This was not the case in general, because in contrast to this was his high regard for front-line officers and troops who were fully committed and whom he said knew what was at stake.

I also suspected why he had explained his strategic and tactical dispositions and the course of the French campaign to me in such detail using the documentary maps. It was not because he now had the first copy of this graphic documentation on his desk; it was not just a presentation of his carefully planned campaign.

Without a doubt, he wanted to confirm his own views in retrospect. His strategic idea and tactical dispositions had been correct and had led to a surprisingly quick victory. His explanations were by no means arrogant. The achievements, bravery, and self-sacrifice of the soldiers and their troops always came first:

For only with these soldiers and their officers could I have dared such planning and bold execution, he told me. And then he added: My strategy for the Russian campaign was just as carefully considered.

He sat there silently for a while, then continued: "When I realized after the talks with Molotov that there was no other option, I had to choose between fighting or surrendering, which would have meant betraying Europe... I chose to fight... it was the hardest decision of my life!"

I wondered why Adolf Hitler had revealed his concerns and thoughts to me. Apart from the fact that his loneliness compelled him to speak openly, he saw in me not only a National Socialist and follower whom he could confide in, but also, I suppose, someone who was connected to him as his architect.

He recognized that I understood his goals—more than that, he felt that I saw in him someone who was "far ahead of his time," someone who was already thinking, planning, and fighting for future generations. Working together on urban development concepts and their architectural details created a sense of familiarity. He recognized and respected me. During these hours of joint planning, he felt connected to peace and to his true calling: the social shaping of the German people and their environment. He found the answer to the challenges of the times, technology, and the new social order. During these hours, he came alive; but I was more than just his architect.

As always, I arrived for lunch. Adolf Hitler was pensive, and the conversation was limited to my impressions of the Danube

. On the very first day of our lunches and dinners together, I had asked to be served the same meal. I could order the casino food, he said, it didn't bother him in the least.

"No, this isn't just for show, I really want to get to know your diet cuisine, and it's also easier for the orderly at the table." So I spooned up the "burnt semolina soup" and fork-fed myself mashed potatoes with vegetables. That afternoon, we had rice pudding for dessert, served with grated chocolate in a small bowl. I sprinkled some over the rice pudding. Adolf Hitler complained that it wasn't enough, that it was a rare treat, and he sprinkled almost everything from the bowl over my rice; he said he wasn't allowed to have too much, pointing to his small portion of rice. It was amazing how little food he could get by on.

After dinner he said: "Giesler, you're not just exhausted, you haven't had too little sleep, I can see it in your face. You will now go for a walk, accompanied, of course, by Professor Brandt, and afterwards

to the sauna, then you'll be able to sleep. I myself am completely tied up with military meetings and deadlines; all planning work is canceled for today. I'll expect you for tea late in the evening, after the situation has been assessed.

During a walk, I talked with Karl Brandt, whom I held in high esteem, about Adolf Hitler's great loneliness and his excessive workload: "If I'm so exhausted after just a few hours of my minor professional duties here and after my conversations with him, imagine how he must feel with his constant demands..."

No, Karl Brandt interrupted me, you have to see it differently, Giesler. It's clear that the nightly conversations with the boss exhaust you, but for him they mean complete relaxation; they give him distance and decisiveness. That's why you're so important here now!

I attended dinner in the mess hall and took the opportunity to talk to Field Marshal Keitel in the presence of General Jodl, naturally about the campaign in France. I wanted to hear his assessment.

Yes, when I think back on it, it gives me confidence. It's rare that he talks about it... he was probably prompted by the maps. But what he explained to you on the basis of this document... I can only add that it was his idea, his work in every detail, he alone was the commander of the French campaign, said Field Marshal Keitel, and continued: When he presented his views on the Western offensive to me back then, in January 1940, worked out down to the tactical details, I was shocked by the audacity, although I had to acknowledge the genius of the strategy. Jodl nodded in agreement and said: We were completely perplexed when he laid it out on the table, complete in every detail!

First he won General Jodl over to his attack plan, while I still couldn't come to terms with it, Field Marshal Keitel continued. I asked myself: Would it be possible to deceive the Allies so that they would motorized army and tank units into the Belgian-Dutch region to intercept the "Schlieffen wing"? Would they consider the breakthrough at Sedan to be merely a tactical, limited attack? Would it even be possible to secure the flanks for the tank thrust to the coast? I would not have had the courage to undertake such a daring operation!

Yes, General Schmundt later told me, Manstein had the same thoughts. His ideas had been met with incomprehension and rejection by the Chief of the General Staff. I learned of this in January and arranged for him to present his thoughts to the Führer. This was possible when he reported to the Führer after his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, around mid-February 1940.

At that time, however, the Führer had already decided on a strategic operation beyond

Had he already planned and determined all the tactical details, right down to the assault troops he needed for Eben-Emael? With unparalleled persistence, he pushed through his strategic idea and all the tactical measures. When Manstein presented his ideas for an offensive campaign to the Führer, he could only confirm the Führer's intentions.

Field Marshal Keitel and General Jodl were hanged in Nuremberg, and General Schmundt was a victim of the assassination attempt on July 20, 1944. But in his posthumous writings, the field marshal confirms what I heard from him in Winniza: The bold, ingenious strategy of the Western offensive is exclusively and unreservedly the work of Adolf Hitler; he alone was the commander of the French campaign.

Sea Lion

Why didn't I give the order to attack England? I had various reasons for that!

It was during our evening tea in Winniza. I usually didn't know what Adolf Hitler was drinking. Once he said that chamomile tea with honey tasted very good.

Well, sometimes it was peppermint tea or rosehip tea, or tea made from a mixture of flowers. And the cooked apple served to him in a glass was absolutely delicious. I was given black tea and oatmeal cookies, which he took one of every now and then.

Certainly, he had made preparations for the attack, and he had his reasons for doing so. he had his reasons for doing so. "Operation Sea Lion" sounded promising, but he was by no means certain. The exercises for the attack had begun, ships had been assembled, and the attack plans had been drawn up:

But I wanted peace! Was it not possible that the preparations for the attack, which had been clearly recognized by enemy intelligence and certainly eagerly reported, could be conveyed via the Vatican, Switzerland, Sweden, and Portugal to England and contribute to a willingness to make peace?

But I soon realized that hatred was stronger; they preferred "blood, sweat, and tears"! The powerful figures in the shadows—incomprehensible—were not affected by this; it was not their blood and suffering, it was the satisfaction of their hatred, combined with profit and power. Churchill was merely following orders.

The attack on the West had never been his objective, he had wanted to avoid it, and therefore the attack on England had seemed pointless to him. What sacrifices would such an attack across the Channel, across the sea, have entailed?

the Channel, across the sea! It was approaching autumn, with rough waters, and most transport ships were not seaworthy.

At first, he saw only a faint sense of unease, then a threat: the enemy's very active diplomatic activity was becoming apparent. Their goal? A renewed attempt at encirclement. But he would leave that aside for now.

So, let's assume we attacked England and, at great cost, the attack was successful. But then what? We would not have the English government, the royal family, or the fleet; they would flee to Canada, and the war in the West would continue, but not to our advantage and in any case with enormous commitment of German forces. For the occupation of England would by no means relieve the pressure in Norway and France.

And how would we feed the island when it was barely enough for us with restrictions? If we bled in front of and in England only to be stuck there, would the Russians roll over the Balkans as they had done with the Baltic states, with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania? First just a

'area of interest', then military occupation and finally Bolshevization, ultimately leading to military and economic strengthening.

But not only that, the Russians could cut off our supplies, block important raw materials in the Balkans, especially oil. Now they had us in their hands, they dictated. We could be glad if they didn't attack us immediately. That depended on how much the attack on England

would drain our strength. Those were his thoughts at the time. Why was England not ready for peace? Churchill said only one word: Russia!

Long before that, when the French campaign was barely over, it had become clear to him that Russia would, depending on the war situation and the global political situation, either act in the Bolshevik sense of claiming world revolution or in the national Russian sense of expansionism, toward the West, toward Europe.

Ultimately, both would amount to the same thing. It was a problem of the utmost importance, not only for Europe, but for the world. It loomed on the horizon like a threatening cloud before a storm.

Certainly, the Russians were not yet entirely ready, but the threat was already apparent. The mobilization against us had begun, first in diplomacy, then soon followed by military preparations.

Now he knew that it would not be long before the blackmail began. He had long since foreseen what Molotov had told him!

Of course, Stalin would have preferred us to attack England, weakening and exhausting ourselves, just as Lenin had predicted. No, ?

Reason? Not only reason, but also European thinking spoke out against an attack on England.

The signs had become increasingly threatening: danger from the East; and this was not only a German decision, but also a European one. Churchill and Roosevelt, the visible figures behind the war machinations in the shadows, had placed their bets on Russia. Preempting them with an attack was our only option; first, to avert the Russian Bolshevik threat; second, to secure food and raw materials; and third, not only to knock the Russian card out of the West's hands, but also to make it clear to them that with Germany securing its food and raw materials, continuing the fight would be pointless.

Certainly, individual operations in the West, such as Gibraltar, would have been possible and could have had a significant impact. But only in isolation, on their own, without drawing Spain into the war; alone, that was impossible for him. He had spoken to me about his disappointment after negotiating with Franco. Of course, he wanted to attack Gibraltar from the mainland. But it was by no means his intention to involve Spain in the war: "With Spain? No way, we have enough to deal with the Italians. They would drag us into theaters of war that are neither in our military nor, certainly, in our political interest." That was one side of the coin, he said; the other was that we had to help them; we couldn't allow them to be defeated on battlefields they had chosen unnecessarily.

He was thinking in particular of the downright senseless attack on Greece, which he had been unable to prevent. He had told me that during his visit to Florence he had been presented with a *fait accompli*, i.e., the expansion of the war, followed by unrest in the Balkans and, as a result, Yugoslavia. All in all, a loss, a tying down of forces, and... we lost time, irretrievable time, over two months... time that was needed to achieve the goals he had set himself in the initial onslaught, which were a prerequisite for the decision. The Russians gained this lost time. With the deployment and mobilization of 175 divisions, they threatened our border.

If Italy had remained neutral, but mobilized and ready to intervene, Italy could have helped us and benefited itself. But he had already predicted to me in 1940 that if we took Paris, we would no longer be able to hold back the Italians, they wanted to be involved; in doing so, they deprived us of victory and the possibility of peace*.

If they had wanted to fight, they should have taken Malta! Thoughtful silence, ? then Adolf Hitler said in a low voice:

Yes, now I was faced with the most difficult decision of my life. What would happen if I opened the gate to the East? Adolf was silent again

Hitler was silent for a while, then said, "That's enough for today, Giesler. I'll see you tomorrow at lunch."

Alone, I had time to think and reflect. Back then,

on October 26 or 27, 1940, I had been invited to the Osteria Bavaria at noon.

Adolf Hitler had arrived in Munich after meetings with Franco and Ntain that morning and wanted to meet Mussolini in Florence afterwards.

The landlord, Deutelmoser, always felt highly honored when Adolf Hitler came to this small, modest restaurant for lunch. There was always excitement in the kitchen, which amused me every time. But Deu-

Telmoser was the epitome of calm as he served the potato soup and carrot salad as carefully as if they were precious treasures. After the meal, I sat alone at the table with Adolf Hitler. He told me about his trip and spoke about Franco and Pétain:

A true soldier, honorable and dignified, he perfectly matched the image

I had formed of a French marshal, but he is already too old to make plans for the

future. Yes, and now Franco? It may be that my disappointment influences my

judgment. My discussion was inconclusive. Franco is not a personality; he is utterly mediocre. Without the Jesuits, who in my opinion not only advise him but also guide him, he would be insignificant. Sure, he's smart in his own way, but so are merchants.

He believes that if he had recognized Franco's political goals and Franco himself in 1936, his sympathies would have been more on the side of those

who were opposed to this feudal system and the clergy. But these revolutionaries were led by communists, and once they gained a foothold, there would be no turning back! A socialism that was appropriate for Spain, yes; a Spanish communist state as a satellite of the Soviets, no. Preventing that was a European task, and in that he agreed with the Duce. So we had to intervene to help. It

It was then up to Franco to break new social ground with the Falangists.

Adolf Hitler looked around the room and met the guests' gazes with a smile and a greeting gesture.

"What will await me in Florence? I have a bad feeling!" he said, turning back to me with a completely different expression on his face.

Then, when asked, I gave him a brief report on the status of the Munich plans and the measures I had initiated for the construction of the motorway ring road and the new railway facilities. I asked whether he agreed that I should put all party buildings and their planning on hold for the time being.

Absolutely, he said, priority must be given to construction projects that serve urban planning and the community.

It was certainly the word "party" that changed his mind.

He was very concerned about Rudolf Hess. He knew that with me talk about it: his almost occult-like obsession, his feeling of being ill, and what he was doing about it. He certainly had nothing against homeopaths and alternative practitioners, but he was completely opposed to those he had entrusted himself to, and then to one after the other. He should really find the courage to trust a doctor of standing. He was genuinely concerned; this was not only because of Hess's position and responsibilities, but simply because he genuinely liked him. He valued him so much and felt so connected to him because he had been loyal since the beginning of the National Socialist struggle.

Adolf Hitler stood up, signaled to the table of his escort, and took his leave, "to face new disappointments and worries, for when he arrived in Florence, Mussolini informed him that he had given the order to attack Greece! This was now the second expansion of the war and the theaters of war, completely undesirable and useless, idiotic, as Adolf Hitler once called it in a conversation with me, a relapse by two millennia, and the origin probably lay more in a historically based myth, a memory of the Roman Empire, or so he put it:

In any case, the unrest in the Balkans, skillfully stirred up by the British, led to the defection of Yugoslavia and thus to the Balkan campaign, which resulted in losses, tied up divisions and aircraft that were needed for the attack on Russia, and above all cost time, precious time!

"The hardest decision of my life," Adolf Hitler had told me at the end of our nighttime conversation in his study at his headquarters in Winniza. A memory came back to me vividly: It was one afternoon at the Berghof, around February 1941. After a meeting with staff from my "Obersalzberg construction management," I found myself taking my usual walk to the tea pavilion in the large living room of the Berghof.

The military meetings had just ended. Adolf Hitler was standing at the marble table in front of the large window with several generals, giving instructions to his adjutants.

Dr. Todt, who had taken part in the meetings with Adolf Hitler, stood next to me, facing backwards in the large room. He pointed to the scene in front of us and said quietly:

"You know about the decision? Russia. It will be tough. Who knows what awaits us behind the Iron Curtain? What we know so far is already threatening! But look, there stands the Führer, collected and calm, and in the background lies the Untersberg. You know the legend, don't you? For a thousand years, the hopes of the Germans have been linked to this mountain.

calm, and in the background lies the Untersberg. You know the legend, for a thousand years this mountain has been associated with the hopes of the Germans. Isn't that strange?

Yes, it was a strange sight, serious and memorable. I saw Adolf Hitler in profile, facing him several generals and SS officers with serious, stern faces. In the background, the view through the large window took in the snow-covered landscape of Berchtesgaden. The Untersberg itself

It lay high above the gloomy forests, now glowing white with red crags in the last sunlight of the day.

In the evening, we sat around the fireplace. Adolf Hitler was silent, withdrawn. The rest of us talked quietly. At midnight, Adolf Hitler addressed a question and a request to Bormann. Then, completely surprising me, the powerful, fateful sounds of Liszt's "Les Préludes" filled the large room, which was lit only by the flickering flames of the fireplace.

Barbarossa

The planned strategy for the Russian campaign as described by Adolf Hitler

I planned the preventive strike against Russia even more carefully than the Western campaign. The threat from the East had become all too obvious. After the campaign in France, I had declared in the Reichstag that there was no reason to continue the senseless war between us and England. The response was a rude rejection of this gesture of peace. England wanted to continue the war, Churchill was serious about "Germany must perish."

I spent many anxious nights poring over maps of Eastern Europe and, looking back, reflecting on the typical English behavior in the conflict-ridden European region. England had always sought to gain advantage by interfering in continental disputes, provoking them, stirring them up, or triggering them through intermediaries. And England had always sought to have a mainland sword fight for it in order to spare its own forces.

France was now out of the picture, and England, confident of Roosevelt's support, would try by any means to get Russia to fight for it.

Certainly, I too had paid a high price in August 1939 for the treaty with Stalin, his silence, and the "pragmatic friendship," in the hope of limiting the war or of not finding ourselves with our backs to Soviet bayonets if the conflict spread.

Stalin turned the areas of interest that had been conceded to him into the brutal occupation of the Baltic states in 1942

of the Baltic states, the cession of Bessarabia, and through a war of deception he forced Finland to its knees.

After the military occupation of the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and Bukovina, Stalin's goal was clear: to become master of northeastern Europe and the Balkans. He wanted free access to the Mediterranean and thus an important starting position against Europe.

Stalin saw an opportunity to do this while we were tied down in the West; he had the England-America constellation in mind, ... he made his decision and made preparations to invade Germany, the only thing that could prevent him from achieving both goals. The threat became apparent, and the Soviet build-up began.

The Soviet military build-up on our eastern border would

I was convinced that political blackmail would soon follow. It was also clear to me that the Bolsheviks' claim to a greater Russia would push them even further westward, given that they already had a natural border in the east with the Pacific Ocean—and had already crossed that border once before.

Stalin would soon be found on the side that offered him the greatest advantages. What's more, these advantages were linked to the elimination of the only power that could resist the advance of Bolshevism into other European territories: Nazi Germany.

I did not see the threat solely in the deployment of Russian armies on our eastern border, which at that time were opposed by only a few divisions. Rather, it was the concern of being dependent on raw materials for warfare and armament, the supply of which the Russians could cut off at any time, according to the Romanian 01, but also ores, bauxite, molybdenum, manganese, chromium, and even nickel from Finland.

I negotiated with Russia again, making a sincere effort. But Molotov arrogantly conveyed Stalin's demands to me: a free hand for Russia in Romania, Bulgaria, and Finland, plus access to the Baltic Sea and the Dardanelles. That meant surrendering Europe. My only option was to defend myself with a preemptive strike. It was not just about Germany, but about the very existence of Europe. The decision was not an easy one for me.

Apart from everything else, it meant postponing the realization of the social part of the tasks I had set myself, which require secure peace as a prerequisite; these tasks, as you know, include the reconstruction of German cities.

When I began preparations, that same eerie sense of betrayal returned, which we had already experienced during the campaign against Poland, during Operation Weserübung, and during the campaign in France. Nevertheless, initial successes were achieved thanks to the enthusiasm and unique fighting spirit of the German soldiers, strategic planning, and outstanding tactical leadership.

, strategic planning, and outstanding tactical leadership.

But after the stormy successes, the wear and tear on men and equipment became apparent. The conquest of vast territories, which had to be fought for hard, led to exhaustion. We had to catch our breath—the supply problem alone forced us to do so—before the decisive blows could be struck according to my strategic plans.

But the stubbornness and single-mindedness of my generals thwarted the strategic planning. In August, a month so important for the decision on Operation Barbarossa, I was so weakened by illness that I was unable to muster the necessary perseverance and steadfastness against my generals to push through my plans.

Twice I thought victory was close—I was mistaken, and I was deceived!

We sat at the work table on stools and drew details of the town house in Linz.

But soon Adolf Hitler's thoughts returned to the war:

I have already spoken to you about strategic planning because I know that, as an architect with a talent for versatile urban planning, you can appreciate the significance and scope of complex planning.

This requires sober, mathematical thinking, but not only in the multifaceted military dimensions. Rather, it also includes the spatial conditions, the assessment of time sequences, and the transport routes for securing supplies. And especially in the vast Russian space, it was important to consider the sources of raw materials and food, as well as the conurbations of the armaments industry. All of this determines the outline of strategic planning, and at the same time results in the ranking of military targets, which in turn requires imagination, intuition, and boldness.
and boldness.

It is certainly possible to assess one's own forces, their combat strength and experience, proven tactical leadership, and the effectiveness of weapons in action. The assessment of the enemy? The evaluation of enemy forces? A complete failure of "reconnaissance" by our general staff and intelligence services, from agents to the military attaché at the embassy—a total lack of real reconnaissance! Our military experts had fallen for Russian deception during the occupation of Poland and the Winter War against Finland.

We knew nothing about the combat value of the divisions. We knew what we were up against, but nothing about what awaited us in the depths of Russia. It was only in battle that the T-34s and the masses of tanks appeared, against which the shells fired by our Paks merely made a thud against

their steel armor! Only the 8.8 cm anti-aircraft shells were able to penetrate the strong armor of the 52 and 100 ton tanks.

Behind the Iron Curtain, an unparalleled military and armament power had built itself up with impenetrable camouflage. In the battle for reconnaissance, we were and remained hopelessly inferior.

I remembered a remark made in December 1941. Adolf Hitler had said to me: "Giesler, we have just narrowly escaped destruction by Bolshevism. Stalin was almost ready to attack us!" He now explained to me the context of his planned campaign against Russia and his experiences after the attack:

The complete underestimation of the enemy, the false reports about his reserves and military strength, his deceptions and confusion, there was also an incomprehensible betrayal. The preemptive strike came as no surprise to no surprise to the enemy; it was communicated to them in advance, down to the day and hour. But that was not all: every single detail, every attack plan was passed on to the enemy by German traitors!

I had expected the betrayal on X-Day. The surprise could only lie, as in the French campaign, in the strategic sequence of our attack. This strategy had been carefully thought out. For reasons of secrecy and to ensure surprise, I had only informed the smallest circle of my plans. The orders for the strategic and tactical operations were to be determined by the situation on the battlefield; they depended on factors such as space, time, weather, and, above all, the strength of the enemy forces.

Now to the strategic structure. The armies were divided into three army groups: North, Center, and South. The focus was on Army Group Center, with Moscow as the target. This was a deliberate deception, because Moscow was not my goal at all. Rather, the enemy forces were to face our attack, engage us, and not retreat. Then they were to be destroyed in encirclement battles.

Adolf Hitler sketched on a notepad between the East and the Black Sea. In front of it, he drew three dots and surrounded them with a small circle. Leningrad

"Moscow - Rostov," he said. He reinforced the arrow of Army Group Center with two additional arrow lines on the right and left. Large circles between these five lines indicated the encirclement of the enemy armies. He drew a thick horizontal line in front of the arrowheads of Army Group Center and the symbol for Moscow:

This was where the attack was to stop and the armored forces with the fast units were to turn off toward Army Groups North and South. The order of precedence determined the sequence of the operations that were now necessary.

Moscow was not my goal; rather, it was necessary to encircle Leningrad

, establish contact with the Finns on Lake Ladoga, cut Leningrad off as an armament center, and deprive the Russian fleet of its base at Kronstadt. Securing the Baltic Sea to ensure supplies was of great importance.

Even more important was the push toward Army Group South. The tank forces and rapid response units had to be fanned out in two stages, at different distances from each other. The goal here was to secure the harvest of the fertile Ukraine, the wheat and oil from the huge sunflower fields, for the troops and the civilian population.

The second north-south thrust from Army Group Center was aimed at raw materials, coal, iron ore, chromium, and manganese, as well as the important power plants in the area around the Dnieper and Donets rivers to Rostov and the Black Sea. There, in close proximity to the raw materials, lay the industrial centers, the conurbations of Russian armaments and economic power.

At the same time, the starting point was gained for the push towards the Caucasus on January 1. But this also created the space needed to secure the oil supply from the Romanian region around Ploesti, which was vital for the war effort, against surprise attacks.

The political aspects would have been extremely significant after such a surprisingly successful campaign strategy!

While Adolf Hitler spoke, he pointed with his pencil to the entries in his strategic plan and added energetic lines to the sketch. He hastily hatched the boundaries formed by the Baltic Sea in the north and the Black Sea in the south, drew circles around the raw material, industrial, and armament areas, and once again outlined the encirclement of Russian armies.

Then the arrowheads of Army Group Center broke through the heavily drawn "halt line" before Moscow, and from the force fields of all army groups he drew curved lines that enclosed Moscow on all sides:

If strength, time, and space allowed, this was to be the final victory. For only in a large-scale, comprehensive pincer movement was it possible to take Moscow and at the same time decisively crush the Russian masses!

Strategically and tactically, I saw these flanking and encircling attacks as the only way to break up the Russian mass formations and thus avoid a costly frontal collision, which we were unable to withstand, either in terms of the number of divisions or, as became apparent during the attacks, in terms of equipment compared to the enemy's tanks and heavy weapons. It was therefore necessary to form mobile centers of gravity in order to overcome the Russian concentrations with the fighting power of our soldiers and our tactical superiority in leadership and to break open the rigid fronts.

The generals had reported to me that the tank divisions and fast units were completely exhausted, that the tanks needed to be overhauled and were not operational. They told me how many weeks this would take. This was how they intended to block the flank attacks I had planned to the north, to Leningrad and the south, to Ukraine and the Donets.

Sketch of Adolf Hitler's strategy for the Russian campaign, drawn during a conversation.

(Drawn from memory by Giesler)

I was ill and without willpower, weakened, I was unable to overcome my own stubbornness and obstinacy. "We generals," they thought unanimously, 'can probably get a better overview of the military situation'!

A high-ranking military figure once told me that, from the army general upwards, obedience decreases and orders are subject to subjective criticism. I have had to experience this very often since then!

Time and again, I had to conclude that my fellow generals completely disregarded political objectives and the geopolitical and war-economic dimensions in their considerations. Most of them had a purely military perspective, and in the Russian campaign, that was traumatically focused on Moscow.

Later, I learned that they accused me of reflecting on Napoleon and being "afraid of Moscow." I did not in any way fail to recognize the military and highly political significance of capturing Moscow, but the prerequisites for this lay first in successful attacks to the north and south, the strategic pillars. Then Moscow might have been the keystone of the gigantic Russian vault.

The time that was favorable for mobile warfare was slipping away, the precious time—it was always time and too much space in this war! After I recovered at the end of September, I was still able to carry out one of the flanking and encircling attacks to the south. I literally had to wrest this operation from my generals, even forcing them with harsh orders. The result was that four Russian armies were defeated and over 650,000 prisoners were taken. Even this success did not convince my generals of the only possible strategy in the Russian theater. Against my inner conviction, they launched a frontal attack on Moscow. Moscow was not important to me, but they could not or would not understand that. And it was too late to implement the grand strategy.

The attack on Moscow encountered increasingly stiff Russian resistance, and with our objective in sight, our divisions, exhausted and weakened by months of hard fighting, collided with Siberian units and ever-new forces brought in from the vast expanses of the country.

The frontal attack on Moscow came to a standstill, as I had foreseen, against the mass of Russian forces. And soon after, the front froze in snow and freezing cold. The winter equipment requested in good time for the soldiers of the army did not reach the front.

My generals were now in favor of retreat, which was tantamount to a Napoleonic defeat, a catastrophe!

The bomb

July 20 and August 1944

At the Führer's headquarters, the Wolf's Lair

In the late afternoon of July 20, my "brother" called me: "Close your office... form a guard unit from all employees with military training... if necessary, I will supply them with weapons; let the others go home... keep the phone busy."

You yourself will drive immediately to my command post after making the necessary arrangements, and under no circumstances allow yourself to be stopped on the way, not even by military patrols. Do you have a weapon handy? No? Well, then

It's better if I send a car with an escort to pick you up. Your place is now in my command center.

What's going on?

There's been an assassination attempt on the Führer, the military is on alert, Berlin has triggered 'Walküre', the situation is still unclear.

As an experienced company commander, my brother had secured his command post and the surrounding area. We waited tensely for further news via telegram from the Führer's headquarters, for phone calls from the liaison officer to the military district, and for messages from the party headquarters, the SS, and the districts. We breathed a sigh of relief when we finally heard the Führer's voice late in the evening.

Everything was quiet in Munich and throughout Military District VII; as far as we could tell that night, it remained that way.

About a week later, Speer came to see me. As he was in a hurry, I got into his car as he drove on toward Stuttgart. The subject was the promotion of war-related construction projects in my area, labor, and steel quotas.

Then we talked about July 20, his motives, and its effects. Speer had been at the FHQu in the meantime and reported briefly on his impressions and on the extent of the conspiracy that had now become apparent.

Speer said with concern:

The Führer was and still is, even after the assassination attempt and its military and political consequences, under great strain. But I believe that now is the time for you to report to headquarters. The Führer needs to gain some distance from the assassination attempt and all the disappointments. Giesler, you are the only one who can distract him, even if only for a few hours over the next 430 days.

. Bring up urban planning issues, Linz and the Danube embankment development; that would interest him even now and take his mind off his constant brooding.

After a few days, the phone call came from the Führer's headquarters. Bormann was brief: "Please come as soon as possible, the Führer is expecting you. Bring any of your plans that might interest him, and of course everything related to Linz!" Full of excitement at the prospect of seeing Adolf Hitler and speaking with him, I arrived to the Führer's headquarters at the Wolf's Lair. But what he then entrusted to me in the weeks that followed, what he told me on his instructions, what I read in documents and protocols, and what I experienced firsthand deeply shook me. I would have considered everything I learned impossible; I felt it was all unreal, like a lemur haunting.

I met Adolf Hitler in front of his bunker, talking to his adjutants, when I entered the restricted area after passing the newly introduced security check to report for duty. But I didn't get that far, because Adolf Hitler came a few steps toward me: "I've been expecting you and am pleased to see you." He shook my hand, taking care to avoid his right arm, which was bent and bandaged; his right leg was obviously painful as well. The side of his face that had been exposed to the explosion was still slightly swollen. He had cotton wool in his ears. But I was amazed by his demeanor, because I had imagined him to be in a much worse condition.

Over tea, to which he immediately invited me, he only mentioned the attack in passing and spoke briefly about his injuries. Linge had to show me his coat and torn trousers, which were slit lengthwise like a mercenary's trousers.

You were searched, Giesler? Do you understand that this is a temporary measure, prompted by the assassination attempt? He said that this would not happen again in future. I objected: "After everything that has happened here, I consider a check to be only natural. It is quite possible that someone could have slipped something into my briefcase..."

No, said Adolf Hitler, check it yourself before you go to the inspections.

He must have given appropriate instructions; no review was carried out on me, either in late autumn or in January/February 1945 in the command bunker of the Reich Chancellery. However, I always checked my file and the plan rolls beforehand.

On the first evening, we talked about urban planning issues, about Linz and Munich. All in all, it was an unexpected and strange conversation for me in those days of turbulent military and political situation. Adolf Hitler seemed tired at first, but then became visibly lively and open during our conversation.

course of our conversation. Bormann asked me to come to him the next morning. He gave me instructions: Please do not ask the Führer any questions about July 20 and what happened then.

unless he brings it up himself. Instead, try everything you can to distract him—talk to him about your plans, mainly about Linz, which interests him most. On the other hand, I think it is right that you are fully informed about all the events of July 20. I will ensure that you are informed of every detail and all the connections. After a short pause:

One matter, however, is subject to absolute secrecy; the Führer will decide whether you will be informed about it. But I urge you not to mention this matter to the Führer!

Incidentally, I was able to inspect all the files, documents, and interrogation reports at his office; they were forwarded to him daily by Kaltenbrunner. This gave me an overview of the entire web of the traitorous clique and the circle of people involved. This enabled me to exercise the restraint that he considered necessary in my conversations with the Führer.

It was only later that I realized what Bormann had meant by this. From then on, I spent the mornings and the time of military situation meetings

. He would take the reports, interrogation records, lists of persons, and investigations, some of which are now known as the "Kaltenbrunner reports," from a safe. But these documents cover only a part—albeit a significant part—of the web of treachery that I learned about at that time.

I then sat down in a corner of his study and read the sober minutes, which revealed how, beginning in the pre-war period, treason against the state and the nation had spread in ever-increasing severity, culminating in the most complete form of betrayal, above all of the fighting front, which brought death to hundreds of thousands of soldiers.

Adolf Hitler's statements, which had often seemed dissonant to me since 1939: "I have the feeling that I am surrounded by treason," his earlier hints, such as on November 8, 1939, in mid-January 1940, then during the "Weser Exercise," at the end of the fighting in France, and his partly depressive, partly rebellious, angry reactions, as I experienced them in 1942 in Winniza, in 1943 in the Wolf's Lair... Well, these reports and proto-protocols confirmed his suspicions, and much more than that: previously inexplicable events became transparent and could finally be interpreted, worse than ever imagined!

I began my reading with the appeals to the Wehrmacht and the German people. Goerdeler to the Wehrmacht: "... Another threat looms that will rob you of the success of your victories, which you have won under the leadership of trained

and experienced men: Hitler's "military genius," which he has arrogated to himself in insane delusion and which has been adored by sycophants in the most disgusting manner. Anyone who wants to sole a boot must have learned how to do it."

Another appeal was even better: "The Führer is dead! A ruthless clique of party leaders who are not on the front lines has taken advantage of the situation to stab the struggling front in the back and seize power for their own selfish purposes..."

With this, von Witzleben wanted to address the German people and the Wehrmacht in order to present himself as the new commander-in-chief of the Wehrmacht. I knew him, formerly, in the still fresh glory of the crossed marshal's batons. He had been filmed before the People's Court denying any knowledge of the assassination attempt and the military coup, which was immediately refuted. When asked, "How did you see yourself actually imagine how things would have continued if the assassination attempt had been successful?" he replied, 'I am a military man, I know nothing about political and civil matters.' He sounded absolutely convincing in the second part of that sentence! The next documents were photocopies: a kind of organizational plan for the coup government and the list of ministers appointed by Goerdeler, who had been elected Reich Chancellor.

. Both documents listed Speer as minister, albeit with a question mark. Surprised, I jumped up and went to Bormann: "What does that mean? That's not possible!" Bormann looked up: "Comrade Giesler, anything is possible in this matter!" He slowly stood up, went to his safe, took out a thick file, opened it, and showed me the top sheet, which had the name "Speer" written on it. "Just this," he said, "for your personal information," and put the file back in the safe. "You will keep quiet about everything," he said as he sat down at his desk again. "That's enough for today, I can't read any more!"

My thoughts went back to a conversation with the Silesian Gauleiter Hanke. That was in March 1944; a war-related construction site in Lower Silesia that had been entrusted to me brought me into contact with him on several occasions. I regarded him as a man of character with intelligent, attentive eyes in a well-formed head. Hanke had proven himself during the war in Berlin and then as a soldier on the front lines, and his clear formulations were consistent with his many years as State Secretary to Dr. Goebbels.

One evening in Salzbrunn, Hanke asked me to advise him after the war advise him on the upcoming urban development and transportation planning problems in Breslau, the capital of the Gau.

"But," I said to him, "you are a close friend of Speer; if I were to agree to your request, apart from my excessive workload,

it would be an affront to Speer that I cannot afford. Speer has still not gotten over the fact that I was commissioned to work on Munich and then Linz as well. Besides, apart from Weimar, most of my commissions as an architect are in the southern part of the Reich.

But you also advise Mayor Freyberg in Leipzig, so—

Yes, I replied, but that was only happening on the Führer's orders, which had been triggered by the problem with the trade fair in connection with the planned broad-gauge railway tracks.

This was one more reason for him to speak to the Führer. He wanted me as an advisor for Breslau, not Speer, for various reasons. He wanted to confide one of them to me: he had very clear ideas about Speer's goals and had insights into his ministry. This made him extremely concerned; it could not end well, and the Führer must be made aware of this. He was particularly distrustful of two of Speer's close associates.

Hanke named them; I knew both of them; they held high ranks, one in the SA, the other in the SS.

Did I know that Speer was seeking to succeed the Führer?

Yes, I had heard about it, but I considered it gossip, a false and arrogant assessment of Speer's character on the part of those around him. It was wishful thinking.

No, Hanke objected, there was more to it than that, he didn't want to burden me with all that stuff, but the Führer had to know about it, yet he couldn't come to the lecture; Bormann completely shielded the Führer and isolated him from everyone, which also worried him. I could... ? ? -

The shielding by Bormann is being done on the Führer's orders, I interrupted him, and Adolf Hitler sees me only as his architect; he would strongly object if I interfered in matters that are none of my business. I ask for your understanding.

You are right, I must try everything myself to speak to the Führer.

The memory of the conversation with Hanke, his criticism of Speer and the two employees of his ministry made me think. But how was Speer's behavior after the assassination attempt on July 20 to be interpreted, when he expressed such concern for Adolf Hitler when he asked me to take plans for Linz to the Führer's headquarters? Even small, insignificant events prior to the assassination attempt now seemed somewhat strange to me.

At the end of June 1944, for example, Speer had summoned the leaders of the military economy, the industrialists of the armaments industry, and the construction commissioners to a conference in Linz, where he called for extreme efforts to further increase armaments production. This "Linz Conference" took place immediately after

...culminated in a speech by Adolf Hitler at the Platterhof on the Obersalzberg. Speer and I spent the evening as guests of Adolf Hitler at the Berghof. After dinner, Speer said to me urgently: "Giesler, please find an opportunity to tell the Führer about the course of the conference and that I ended it with a performance of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony in the banquet hall of St. Florian's Abbey." Speer knew how much Adolf Hitler appreciated this symphony. Late in the evening, he said: "My Führer, I suggest that Giesler tell you some funny anecdotes." With Speer, everything was pragmatic calculation*; even as a "friend," he remained alien and enigmatic to me. And now his name was on the list of conspirators, albeit with a question mark.

In the evening, Adolf Hitler spoke to me about his successor. Was it a coincidence, or was it prompted by a hint from Bormann, triggered by my reaction that morning?

Adolf Hitler said:

After this terrible war, only those who have risked their lives as soldiers and proven their bravery and willingness to sacrifice have the right to stand before the nation. It goes without saying that they must have leadership qualities and charisma; they must also be intelligent and logical in their thinking.

Yes, but above all, he must have character. Only a brave soldier in this war has the right to lead the nation!

Then he was silent for a long time. The next morning, I sat in the corner of Bormann's office again and continued reading reports, documents, and messages. Not another word was said about Speer, and that was that.

But I didn't just read, I followed what was happening at Bormann's desk, I observed him and his way of working. In doing so, I gained new insights into the nature of this powerful man, feared and hated by many, the "gray eminence" of the party. For me, he became more transparent and understandable during this period than in the years before. I want to describe him from my point of view.

There sat the much-maligned man, often in shirtsleeves during the heat of summer. With alert energy and immense diligence, he worked his way through piles of files, dictating and making phone calls without stopping. He had the stamina of a fighting bull. I think Adolf Hitler saw him accurately when he once said to me: Bormann is like his signature, and that looks like the Hohe Göll*. I was often present when Bormann gave lectures, and I think he did so in a matter-of-fact and focused manner, weighing all the pros and cons, mostly on important matters. Sometimes it was about people or events I was familiar with, and I could see how clearly and correctly he presented the facts. Then Adolf Hitler made his decision

and explained it. This briefing of the Führer on all areas of the state, the party, and the entire civilian sector sometimes lasted for hours

. I drew pictures while listening intently. An adjutant would appear and report on the "situation," or there would be an interruption due to scheduled appointments: "Giesler, we'll continue later." "Bormann, make sure Giesler gets some refreshments."

A little later, I was sitting in my corner again, enjoying refreshments, reading the reports or quietly observing Bormann's working methods. He dictated to two, often three secretaries in succession. But strangely and astonishingly at the same time, Bormann dictated the gist of the proceedings, but Adolf Hitler's decision and the reasoning behind it from memory, word for word and in the exact sentence order in which Adolf Hitler had spoken. In between, he shaped

He summarized the letters and instructions that needed to be written. Phone calls interrupted him, new telegram tapes were brought to him, and he continued dictating where he had left off. Another call came in, Bormann looked at me at me: "The 'situation' is over, the Führer is waiting for you," and turned back to his work.

Who could have endured that, day after day, late into the night, year after year! Bormann was truly like the Hohe Göll, and like the Göll, he cast shadows in the bright light. Of course he cast shadows. Sometimes I had real arguments with him, or he with me.

Adolf Hitler intervened twice: "Giesler, please make up with Bormann." Once it was at the Berghof, in the spring of 1944, when he said to me: "Giesler, if you want to leave here prematurely because of Bormann, full of anger, ... but you are a guest of Mrs. Bormann during this time,

And you are also my guest, aren't you? No, you can't do that to us! By the way, let me tell you, Bormann is absolutely right in this matter. Of course, he should have given you a few words of explanation about what I am doing here...

... Well, you see!

Giesler, I need Bormann and his manpower. He takes the pressure off me, he's steadfast, unshakeable, and he gets things done. I can rely on him! In retrospect, I always thought that Bormann was justified in treating me harshly or that he was acting on orders from Adolf Hitler.

Bormann had eyes everywhere, which showed his former career as an estate manager. I once accompanied him on one of his inspection tours of the small estate that supplied the Obersalzberg. He checked everything, right down to the mushroom cellars; nothing escaped his gaze. Then we climbed into the woods above the Berghof grounds. There he showed me his wildlife

in the outdoor enclosure, including an eagle owl and squirrels; I can't remember what else was jumping around there. He had bee colonies brought to the Hoher Göll for the spruce blossom season. He was enthusiastic about the magnificent road that opened up this mountain to him:

Dr. Todt personally explored and marked out this route high up through the rocky cliffs; it is the most beautiful and daring road far and wide. I greatly admired Dr. Todt and still think of him often, he said.

On the way back, he turned off the road and looked around the area: "How I like it here. I think you have a wonderful view from here, all around, it's very beautiful up here.

Yes, and it's in a good location, said Bormann, connected to the road, which is cleared of snow even in winter, and there's spring water nearby. You will be settled here after the war so that you can be at the Führer's disposal at any time. As we walked on, he whistled to himself: "A la mi presente al vostra signori" – the old mercenary song.

During the difficult days of August 1944, when disloyalty and betrayal were rampant, Bormann said to me, and he was very serious:

I have a duty and a goal, which is to serve the Führer faithfully as a National Socialist. My sole ambition is to do this as well as I can. The Führer gives me the authority I need to do this. I use it, but it serves only this task of mine. You surely do not doubt that I am completely committed to the Führer. I want nothing more than to relieve him of some of his heavy burden, and that is not easy! I believed him!

But back to the events. I sat quietly in the corner of Bormann's office again and read the reports of the interrogations, which were becoming increasingly dense*. One detail in particular stuck in my mind from the interrogation of Theodor Strünck, who described Admiral Canaris as shameless because Canaris had asked him to blame everything on Oster and Dohnanyi in his statements.

In the evenings, the first films of the trials before the People's Court were shown. It was usually around the time of the military briefings, so I couldn't miss anything and watched these films first*.

I knew some of the defendants personally, and I had formed impressions of the others from the interrogation transcripts, which were now vividly complemented by the film. Hoepner, von Witzleben, Stieff—how different they were from young officers like Klausning and Bernardis! They stood by their actions with dignity, but distanced themselves from them: Yes, if only they had known what misery reigned at the top of their conspiracy!

I saw the confrontation between Major von Leonrod and his confessor, Chaplain Wehrle, and heard the harrowing exchange. I felt my way to the door and avoided the rest of the films.

One evening, for some reason, Adolf Hitler spoke about July 20.

July 20. I told him that I had seen some films of the trials before the People's Court and was shaken. Adolf Hitler replied:

"I don't want to see any of that, it's enough for me to read the reports. The assassination attempt has not only exposed high treason, but also disgusting treason against the country, which has now become clear to me. I had long suspected the betrayal; in Winniza I felt it directly, ? often I thought I could physically feel the surveillance. But now I am learning far more than what has been announced. After sober consideration, I believe it is right to remain silent ? in the interests of the fighting front and for the sake of the unity of the people.

This reactionary clique had been plotting my downfall through revolt or assassination since 1938, if not earlier. But to confront me openly with weapons was not in their nature. How they must have hated me and National Socialism to betray even the fighting troops so shamelessly and pitifully! The full extent of this shameful activity is now becoming apparent, and it is so disgusting! Rattenhuber and Högl will tell you some of it, but it must remain confidential. I have sworn everyone who knows anything about it to secrecy, and that includes you! The story
Führer Headquarters Wolf's Lair ? August 1944

"For Brutus is an honorable man;

So are they all, all honorable men, ?"

The head of the security command, SS Brigadeführer Rattenhuber, and Criminal Inspector Högl came to see me. Rattenhuber said they had come on the Führer's orders to inform me of events connected with

July 20 or that had been uncovered after the assassination attempt. What they had to tell me was strictly confidential.

Högl thought it would be better if we went outside. So we walked back and forth along the short forest path between Bormann's wooden building and the mess hall barracks.

The two were very different: Rattenhuber was in uniform, tall and burly, , Högl mostly in civilian clothes, small and stocky, serious and with attentive eyes. Rattenhuber recounts:

First, let's talk about the assassination attempt. Stauffenberg was waiting in his car in the second security cordon for the explosion. When the explosives detonated, Stauffenberg immediately drove to the airfield with his adjutant. On the way, they threw a package of explosives, which they had strangely not put in the briefcase, into the bushes beside the forest road.

The explosives and detonators were from the English, said Högl, and they certainly had precise knowledge of the planned assassination; the authorities had been in contact with each other for a long time. Stauffenberg was surprised by the change in plans and didn't have time to stuff the briefcase with the second package of explosives, otherwise everyone would have been killed!

Rattenhuber said: "They were disrupted in their preparations

I won't be dissuaded, they went all out, Stauffenberg recklessly blew up his co-conspirator, Colonel Brandt, in the process.

Haeften got Stauffenberg out of the "situation" with a fake conversation; it was all carefully planned. Stauffenberg had placed the briefcase containing the explosives on the conference table in front of him on top of the "situation maps." Now he stands up, leaning on his briefcase, and presses down on the detonator. He bows briefly to the Führer, apologetically indicating that he has to take a phone call, then disappears.

The "situation" continues, a location is named, a combat position, "and of all places, the briefcase with the explosives is lying on top of it! General Schmundt places the briefcase on the floor, then it is pushed to the base of the table.

That's all I know, I said.

Yes, now it's getting interesting. The two are now out of the restricted area and at the car that has been provided. Next to the car stands Fellgiebel, "You know him, don't you?" the general and head of intelligence. They are all looking eagerly over at the "situation barracks."

How do you know that? I interrupted him.

Lieutenant Colonel Sander was standing there and witnessed it. Now it's happening, and Stauffenberg and Haeften are driving to the airport. They were surely convinced that they had blown up the Führer and everyone in the "Lage."

That was the impression you had to have: they're all dead!

You can imagine what was going on here: security services, escort command, doctors, paramedics, officers, orderlies, OT workers from the bunker construction site, all mixed up. The Fell-giebel is now going with him to restricted area I to observe the rescue operations.

When he saw that the Führer was alive and, only slightly injured, supported by Field Marshal Keitel, coming out of the destroyed "Lage-Baracke," he went up to the Führer and congratulated him on his rescue! And yet he said, "God knows," "That's what happens when you go so close to the front lines with headquarters." He stood at attention, pants tucked in, belt buckled, pistol strapped, Rattenhuber reported. Högl continued:

The interrogations then revealed that it was Fellgiebel in particular who believed that the so-called "initial spark" for the coup could only be triggered by an assassination attempt on the Führer, a successful

successful assassination, of course. That didn't work out. Fellgiebel must have known that his involvement in the whole thing couldn't remain hidden; it was his turn now, without a doubt. Why didn't he pull out his pistol and shoot? No one could have stopped him, because none of us none of us expected anything like that. But they were too cowardly to actually do anything; they were only good at treachery.

Yes, I interrupted, I already know all that from the interrogation reports I've read. But the Führer has hinted to me that there is much more behind the Fellgiebel affair and the intelligence service, not just knowledge of and involvement in the assassination attempt and the Walküre coup.

He told me it was too disgusting to talk about, that I should let you tell me. We will, just wait and see. So the Führer, still dazed by the explosion, asked, 'What's Fellgiebel doing here?' That's when he first became suspicious. But at first, of course, it's hard to believe that such malicious deceit is even possible – they were 'sacred cows' to us, after all.

Not for me anymore, said Rattenhuber, since Seydlitz and his committee have been working for the Russians against the German front.

Well, said Högl. In any case, suspicion initially pointed in all directions until it was finally established that a military clique had planned the cowardly attack, which Stauffenberg then carried out. And within this clique, Fellgiebel had the task of blocking or paralyzing the entire communications system here. He succeeded in doing so with the main exchanges, but for some reason or out of ignorance, some lines were not cut off. This enabled Dr. Goebbels and Major Remer to telephone the Führer, and thus the coup in Berlin collapsed.

collapsed. It is strange that Fellgiebel did nothing to alert the clique in Bendlerstraße in Berlin after the assassination attempt on the Führer had failed, so they continued with the coup, and everything came to nothing.

Ah, said Rattenhuber, perhaps the fur-capped man was trying to camouflage himself through restraint, just as his representative and successor, General Thiele, did in the days that followed. All in all, the conspiracy from "above" had to fail simply because they had not reckoned with the decent officers and soldiers who did not participate, who stood by their oath and the oath-bearer. They didn't even have a company behind them, and not one of the whole clique had the courage to draw a pistol against the Führer. At first, we only knew that Fellgiebel belonged to the inner circle of conspirators and had advocated the elimination of the Führer as a prerequisite for the success of the Valkyrie Putsch during the clique's deliberations. He was arrested by us.

But then something strange happened: a sergeant from the intelligence unit at the Führer's headquarters came and reported an unusual double connection, a parallel or bridge connection, "only accessible by officer telephone calls." Messages, reports, or the transmission of orders, operational instructions, and tactical details, 'only through officers' telephone calls,' could be overheard by activating this connection at a third location!

The sergeant was an expert and understood the technical communications stuff. He had become suspicious, but his open mistrust only arose after Fellgiebel's arrest.

It now transpired that there was a direct connection to Switzerland from the communications center of the Führer's headquarters via some kind of coupling; through a switch connection, which was most likely located in or near Berlin, messages and orders could be intercepted there! The reports of betrayal were sent to Switzerland via wire, Högl added, and not by radio; that has now been established beyond doubt. We believe that at the other end of the line was the Swiss secret service, and some of them must have connections to Soviet spy groups, ? and they then transmitted encrypted messages to the enemy. This went on for years.

We knew all along that the Soviet radio centers in "neutral Switzerland," which were fed information by the various spy groups, we knew all along. They were precisely located by direction finding. They could only exist there with the knowledge and tolerance of a group of people in charge of the Swiss secret service who, consciously or unconsciously, were serving the Bolsheviks. Schellenberg had already tried in negotiations to put a stop to espionage in Switzerland.

"And what have you been doing here?"

Nothing at first, said Rattenhuber, we didn't turn the whole place upside down right away. The Führer said it wasn't Fellgiebel alone, he may have known about it; and he gave the order: secrecy and continuous monitoring of these circuits. That paid off, it had all kinds of consequences!

Well, now let's start with case number 2. Fellgiebel was initially arrested only as a participant in the conspiracy and as an accomplice to the assassination. We still had no information about the technical details of the long-suspected treason on the front lines. At the suggestion of Field Marshal Keitel, General Thiele, Fellgiebel's former representative, is now his successor. As the new head of the intelligence service entrusted to him, he reports to the Führer with an oath and a pledge of allegiance.

Meanwhile, the report from the sergeant of the intelligence unit arrives.

Surveillance begins in secret, and it doesn't take long before it becomes clear: General Thiele is involved in this

macabre band and knows about the secret connection, or "parallel connection," as the technicians call it.

Because one person implicates another, his membership in the conspiratorial clique is revealed at the same time. And now the dominoes continue to fall in the intelligence service: the chief of staff at Fellgiebel, a Colonel Hahn, and the head of the intelligence department at the commander of the reserve army, a Colonel Hassel. All are arrested. Högl and I take care of Thiele, with all the courtesy and respect that a general is entitled to. In the process, something very embarrassing happens to the general.

Rattenhuber told me about it, but it doesn't fit into my transcript.

So, Professor, now wonder why the Führer finds this so repugnant and why he didn't tell you himself? This betrayal of the fighting front affected him more than the assassination attempt.

He told us recently that he had long expected someone from this reactionary clique to shoot him, but he never thought an officer capable of such treachery, especially not the mean betrayal of soldiers who risk their lives for Germany every day!

How could they play their game for so long, I said, why weren't they exposed long ago? The boss had been hinting at betrayal to me since 1939, and after France's surrender he told me that he was now certain that the betrayal came from high up in the military, and that he already knew the details in Win-niza. I still remember his words exactly: "Should I extend my mistrust to those involved in the situation, or are the traitors sitting at the junctures?" By that he surely meant the intelligence headquarters.

Rattenhuber replied:

"That is precisely what is troubling us, because we felt responsible not only for the Führer's safety. But even there, our powers were limited: until July 20, anyone could approach the Führer with a weapon, even with a loaded gun, as Stauffenberg did with his briefcase."

He only needed to be well-known or have a pass for restricted area !! The mere thought that an officer or even a general could commit treason or assassinate the Führer was, until then, unthinkable.

? well, sacrilege! This is a great shock for all of us.

What will happen now?

First of all, we must keep quiet. It's unimaginable what will happen when the front and the homeland find out. Only the Führer decides who will be informed about this treacherous mess.

But there's a lot of commotion in the newsagent's now. Fellgiebel had started transferring officers before the assassination attempt

— those were the ones he didn't trust, decent soldiers who stood by their oath and wouldn't have gone along with the mess the powers that be wanted to create — just like many in the Bendlerstraße and in the intelligence headquarters who stopped in time, otherwise the Valkyrie confusion would have been even greater. Of course, caution is now called for. Guderian has proposed a new head of intelligence, who is reporting to the Führer today.

Towards evening, after talking to Rattenhuber and Högl, I met Colonel General Guderian at the tea house, as I had done several times in the past week, and to my surprise, General Praun was with him. Guderian,

I liked him very much for his spirited manner and military bearing, but he was visibly extremely tense. We had a brief, polite conversation, and I sensed that his thoughts were far away, preoccupied with military problems.

I then had a more in-depth conversation with General Praun. He was the brother of my colleague Dr. Theo Praun, whom I had held in high esteem; he had first been head of the legal department of my office, Generalbaurat München, and then Oberstfrontführer of the OT Einsatzgruppe Russia-North and Baltic States, which Dr. Todt had entrusted to me towards the end of 1941. In January 1944, Dr. Praun was murdered by partisans together with Front Leader Bärkessel while traveling to an OT unit in the area of the

16th Army. The murder was mentioned in glowing terms on Russian radio. I got to know General Praun at the funeral of my colleagues. At that time, he was commanding a division. Previously, he had been Guderian's communications commander in the French campaign due to his technical expertise and had now been appointed by the Führer as the new head of communications on Guderian's recommendation.

During our conversation, I asked General Praun for his impression, and he replied hesitantly and very cautiously. I probed cautiously with questions to determine how much the Führer had told him about the betrayal. General Praun said that the meeting had been brief, that the Führer had only briefly referred to the "unbelievable conditions" within the communications service, and that he, General Praun, was to put things in order!

I got the impression that the first veil had already been lifted from the macabre betrayal. General Praun then made a serious effort to investigate the rumors about the betrayal, insofar as they had been leaked. I know that he spoke with Detective Superintendent Högl, who referred him to the investigation team under Kaltenbrunner. He may have asked around further, but he was denied any further information about Fellgiebel, Thiele, Hahn, and Hassei*.

Strange, but entirely understandable to me, was the behavior of Detective

Högl, who referred him to Kaltenbrunner, by Kaltenbrunner himself, who made him the reasonable suggestion of having Fellgiebel questioned by staff officers, and finally by Gestapo chief Müller, who refused to provide any information about Fellgiebel, Thiele, Hahn, and Hassei. The fact that the sudden investigations, searching for parallel connections that had long since been eliminated, were unsuccessful does not surprise me*.

But there was betrayal, it was constant and on an unbelievable scale. In the Russian battle stations overrun during German offensives, German soldiers found their own operation and attack plans! Most of the German operations, which had been planned with strategic and tactical responsibility and care and carried out with fighting spirit and sacrifice, were shattered by enemy countermeasures that were only possible through betrayal. The element of surprise, which is essential for successful attacks, was no longer achieved.

When assessing this great act of treason, the betrayal by the "Red Orchestra" recedes into insignificance, even though the head of German counterintelligence, Admiral Canaris, who was still in his position of trust at the time, declared before the Reich Military Court that the betrayal by the "Red Orchestra" had certainly claimed a quarter of a million victims!

But what was this alarming, yet paltry betrayal compared to the intangible betrayal at the highest military level, which only became fragmentarily visible through the assassination attempt, and which came directly from the headquarters!

It fluctuated between high treason and treason against the state. Hatred, craving for recognition, lack of character, and reactionary attitudes of yesterday were the motives for an almost unbelievable conspiracy with the enemy, whose goal was to destroy Germany. Of course, the conspirators portrayed their betrayal as necessary and in the interests of higher human goals. They did not sacrifice themselves, but rather the German soldier, who paid with his life.

There could therefore be no revolution from "above"; there were no preconditions for it, there was nothing there, no substance, no program that could claim to be taken seriously, no inspiring idea, no serious consideration of how things should continue after a successful coup. And there was not even a personality.

Civil war would have followed the success of the assassination and the general coup, and hatred would have lasted for generations. The relentlessness of the enemies would not have changed.

Something terrible has happened, much may fade away, much can be buried.

Much will be impossible to overcome, including betrayal. One can try to dismiss it as insignificant, cover it up, even glorify it, but nothing will help, because betrayal cries out across the centuries. 444

The Last Ring

Führer Headquarters Wolf's Lair ? August 1944

The stark, sober "Kaltenbrunner reports" on the interrogations and confessions of the conspirators continued to arrive. I was behind in reading these reports and documents. For quite some time, I had been busy in my spare hours with sketches, partly as background material for new meetings, partly prompted by the thoughts and suggestions Adolf Hitler had expressed in our nightly conversations. I also needed to gain some distance and time to come to terms with what Rattenhuber and Högl had told me.

When I returned to Bormann one morning, he gave me the report on the interrogation and confession of Major General Stieff. From this, one could gain the impression that, instead of serving the tasks entrusted to them, the conspirators had been almost exclusively preoccupied with musing, making plans, and attempting to kill their supreme commander—in a manner that was as safe as possible for themselves. They had to remain intact, after all.

According to Stieff, Stauffenberg briefly considered that his adjutant, First Lieutenant von Haeften, should carry out an assassination attempt on the Führer with a firearm. The opportunity would present itself during a "Führer situation" or a weapons demonstration. But then "they" decided that this was too risky.

After "they" had hesitated for so long, Stieff himself wanted to carry out the assassination, or so he claimed. The opportunity arose during a weapons demonstration near Klessheim Castle near Salzburg, a building designed by Fischer von Erlach, which I had been involved in converting into a guest house for the Reich.

The plan was to present the new combat uniform of the assault units, with backpacks, assault rifles, and hand grenades, to the Führer after the heavy weapons. Three sergeants and non-commissioned officers with high decorations and the golden close combat clasp had been selected for this task. Major General Stieff's intention was to install English explosives with time fuses in the assault packs, which would certainly have made it possible keep themselves at a safe distance from the detonation. After the actual weapon demonstration, Adolf Hitler canceled the presentation of the new combat equipment due to time constraints

and a scheduled appointment, he canceled the demonstration of the new combat equipment. We drove back to the Berghof.

During the screening, however, I noticed a small general who stood out from the rest of the military staff, looking important and excited. "Who's that little guy?" I asked the SS adjutant. "That's Major General Stieff." I remembered that as I continued reading: "... True disloyalty has spread throughout the entire population as well as in circles of the Wehrmacht, especially among the enlisted men and junior officers.

Major Stieff. I remembered this as I read on: "... True dismay has spread throughout the entire population, as well as in circles of the Wehrmacht, especially among the enlisted men and junior officers, at the fact that the traitors planned to place the bomb in the knapsacks of three front-line soldiers who were to be presented to the Führer for inspection of a new uniform..."

I looked at Bormann and said, "If what Stieff said is true, then he is a special asset to the conspiratorial clique!"

Do you think more of Stauffenberg, who carried out the assassination attempt without regard for his comrades and his fellow conspirator Brandt, whom he blew up in the process? For me, the picture is complete: When he landed in Berlin-Rangsdorf and reported to those waiting in the Bendlerstraße for the successful completion of the assassination attempt, he said: "This is General Stauffenberg speaking!" Look, he had promoted himself to general. By the way, do you remember the orderly's report about Stauffenberg's strange behavior at the Berghof on July 11?

The "situation" in the large living room was not yet over, Stauffenberg was no longer needed and had signed out, "it wasn't long ago." The two of us were talking in the back of the hall, near the small living room, when the orderly appeared and reported:

'I was just checking the dining room to make sure everything was ready for lunch, and there in the middle, behind the Führer's seat, is the colonel with one arm. I told him the room was private and asked him to leave. He interrupted me, saying, 'Sorry, I just wanted to take a look!

Yes, I said to Bormann, I remember, the 'colonel with one arm' had said to the orderly, 'Very dignified here, very nice, especially with the bay window,' before the orderly opened the door and asked him to leave the dining room.

Bormann: I then gave the orderly a dressing-down; I found out that the colonel was carrying a briefcase. What do you think he had in it?

Carrot salad and pudding, to contribute something to lunch? was my inappropriate remark. Bormann grimaced:

We know that now, ? with the wide, long table and the tablecloth hanging down so low, no one could have seen the briefcase. In those days, you were the guest of honor at the table, sitting opposite the Führer ? You can thank the squad leader sometime!

I replied: These repeated assassination attempts, which come to nothing, seem fateful to me. I think of the assassination attempt in the Bürgerbräu, where a bomb was allegedly planted on an airplane, now I read here about the cruelty of Kleßheim, then the memory of

the affair at the Berghof, and then July 20th, and yet the Führer survives with only minor injuries! Are there more attacks of this kind that I don't know about?

The only minor injuries are one side of the coin, Bormann replied, the other side is much more profound, believe me! As for your question: yes, there were more assassination attempts that are only now coming to light. Talk to "the two of them" about it, I don't have time.

At first, I continued reading; they were the interrogation transcripts of Admiral Canaris and his protégé Oster, everything was obscure and strangely veiled. In the gloomy, depressing reading of these interrogation reports, there was one thing that amused me: a photocopy of a letter to Major General Oster from his son Achim, an intelligence officer in Upper Silesia. The content stuck with me; it said something like: "The conditions here are very pleasant. The commanding general is Reiter, a grand seigneur of the ancien regime, a real general, not a soldier of the people. I would have liked to have seen this general."

In later years, as a "war criminal" in Landsberg, I heard the strange opinion during my rounds in the prison yard that Oster's betrayal of the German attack dates, which brought death to countless soldiers, was not betrayal at all, but that Oster had merely wanted to prevent the war from spreading to the north and west. He only wanted to prevent the invasion of Denmark and Norway, Belgium and Holland – all neutral states! The governments of these states were warned by Oster in good time so that they could protest against Hitler's plans for invasion before God and the world.

That could then stop Hitler and force him to settle all conflicts peacefully.

These were very strange interpretations and whitewashing of what was clearly high treason and treason against the state. One of these prophets, who believed that treason could be considered a minor offense and who thought it was right

sacrifice German soldiers and endanger the nation's existence in the interests of higher human goals was the diplomat and former State Secretary in the Foreign Office, von Weizsäcker. He certainly held this view in order to justify his own behavior. I met him in the Landsberg WCP with open contempt.

To those influenced by this chatter, I said that it was precisely these new propagandists who had successfully prevented a peaceful settlement of all conflicts, because Adolf Hitler had not wanted the war and had been forced into the war in the East by the West and the East. I told them that Adolf Hitler would have preferred to build, do social work, and create an exemplary redesign of cities, combined with a reasonable...

Many of these intellectually impoverished people even allowed themselves to be persuaded that the motorways built by Adolf Hitler were nothing more than megalomaniacal road projects!

I countered this intellectual confusion with a quote attributed to Napoleon I, but which actually comes from Josef Görres in the Rheinischer Merkur of 1814: "There is no people more gullible than the Germans . . . they strangled each other and thought they were doing their duty. No other people on earth is more foolish." No lie can be devised that the Germans will not believe. For a slogan given to them, they persecute their compatriots with greater bitterness than their real enemies*:

My report returns to the Führer's headquarters at the Wolf's Lair, August 1944, to the most turbulent weeks I have ever experienced. The events weighed heavily on my mind, I felt the downfall coming, I believed that the Reich must now collapse. The fronts were wavering, the threat was closing in from all sides. Added to this was the oppression caused by the increasingly apparent extent of the betrayal that had been perpetrated.

The assassination attempt on July 20 was like a stone thrown into calm water, initially causing a bubbling commotion, around which rings formed, through the interrogations and confessions and then the important statement obsession of Goerdeler, who now brought the betrayal among the traitors. But now, while the bubbles were still rising and bursting in the center, a final ring formed before the tenacity of the water prevailed. But it was precisely this ring, no longer visible to many, that brought the great shock to Adolf Hitler: it affected the front itself!

For years he had asked himself: Why are we failing in everything? Our commanders inform the enemy about every military operation!

Back in Winniza in 1942, he had told me that something was wrong, that he suspected treason at a high level. After the disaster at Stalingrad, communist emigrants and deserters worked openly with some of the officers who had been taken prisoner by the Russians. The collapse of Army Group Center due to the Russian offensive in July 1944, which resulted in the loss of 25 divisions, hit Adolf Hitler hard. He suspected treason here as well, as he had in the failure of the "Citadel" offensive the previous year.

Investigations triggered by the assassination attempt then brought to light information that confirmed Adolf Hitler's suspicions. The general staff officer of Army Group Center, General von Tresckow, shot himself, and Major Kuhn of the General Staff defected to the Russians.

Further clarification came from the statement by Leuschner, the former Hessian Minister of the Interior, who had been designated by the conspirators as vice-chancellor

under Goerdeler. At the Führer's headquarters in the Wolf's Lair, no significance was initially attached to Leuschner's statement.

However, Leuschner made his statement after his conviction, so that there was little doubt about its veracity in view of his impending death.

This statement made the contours of the betrayal that contributed to the destruction of Army Group Center clearer. At the same time, it cast the former chief of the General Staff, Ludwig Beck, in a strange light.

General Beck took his own life on the evening of July 20 in Bendlerstrasse, knowing that the assassination attempt had failed and the revolt had collapsed; Leuschner's statement therefore stands on its own.

To complete the measure of treason and disloyalty, Adolf Hitler was informed between August 15 and 18 of an attempt by the military leadership in the west to conspire with the Allies.

The breach of trust and attempted suicide of the military commander in France, General von Stülpnagel, were alarming. The commander-in-chief of the West, Field Marshal von Kluge, was relieved of his duties and ordered to report to headquarters. On his way to the airfield, he took poison.

On the one hand, there was a complete discrepancy between the field marshal's efforts, which had become known in the meantime, to conclude an armistice with the Allies without the Führer's knowledge and to conduct the necessary negotiations, ? although he must have known that this would result in the collapse of all fronts, and on the other hand, the fact that shortly before his suicide he wrote a letter to the Führer in which he assured him of his loyalty.

One evening in the Wolf's Lair, Adolf Hitler spoke to me about this betrayal. He said:

Those were the worst days of my life! How easy and simple it would be for me to end my life? What is my life? With all its disappointments, it is nothing but struggle and worry and oppressive responsibility. But fate and providence have assigned me these tasks and burdens, and does not the latest assassination attempt prove that we must now be steadfast, faithful, and confident in continuing this struggle? But if this struggle is to have any meaning, the traitors must be eradicated, for all efforts and bravery are in vain against treachery within one's own ranks.

How treacherous and pathetic is this betrayal? I have felt it all these years, and everything in me has always rebelled against believing that German officers, generals, to believe them capable of such a thing, to associate them with it! It was inconceivable to me: treason in wartime, treason against the people and against the fighting soldiers! I believed I could win everyone over, since the very existence of Germany was at stake, even Europe! I set out to destroy Marxism

and replace it with socialism for the nation. I won over the workers, but I underestimated the reactionaries. They were there, in the Reichswehr, in industry, in the economy, and in the financial sector. They were there as failed politicians and active diplomats.

I underestimated their ambition, which was based on nothing, their need for recognition despite their intellectual poverty. I underestimated all of that!

I neglected to clear away these fossils of the past. I forgot about the hardship, the rebuilding, the reconstruction, the war and its burdens and challenges, and that I am a revolutionary.

I did think about it, I could and had to expect that one day someone from the ranks of these reactionaries would shoot at me. But I never considered the possibility that a general staff officer would be capable of such a despicable crime, even though my experiences since 1938 should have prepared me for anything. They did not have the courage to openly resist me and shoot.

A new aristocracy, a new system of values and hierarchy must be created, and it will be determined by character, bravery, and steadfastness.

I apply a quote from Nietzsche to myself: 'What proves today whether a man is of value or not is that he stands his ground!'

The evening ended with discussions about urban planning issues. Was it a distraction and relaxation? Was it confidence? I don't know: Adolf Hitler was preoccupied that night with modern traffic structures in cities.

Technology and morality of the traitors

Führer headquarters, Wolf's Lair ? Autumn 1944

"Walküre" was the code name for the alert status of troops in garrisons and training camps, the mobilization of vacationers

and soldiers on training courses in order to deal with emergencies within the Reich.

They were supposed to prevent revolts by prisoners of war and foreign workers.

Walküre' also included combating enemy landings on the coasts and airborne operations, in short, all operations that would be necessary to protect the territory of the Reich. Command authority was sensibly vested in the Wehrmacht.

The investigations triggered by the assassination attempt on July 20 were essentially complete. During his illness at the end of September, Adolf Hitler had found time to reflect in the seclusion of his bedroom. He told me:

"Walküre was intended for the protection of the Reich territory. The conspirators used 'Walküre' as a deception and as a tool for a treacherous attempt at overthrow. But even the position of power and the opportunities offered by Valkyrie offered, neither their abilities nor their determination were sufficient. The assassination attempt, the 'initial spark' as they called it, failed. The conspirators had no Brutus.

, failed. The conspirators had no Brutus.

An aristocrat, a colonel, with the knowledge and approval of the general's clique, tried to get rid of me in a sneaky way. I must say that the hypocrisy, cowardice, and treachery, the breach of oath, high treason, and treason against the state have affected me more than the explosion of the infernal machine with English explosives that this aristocrat had placed under my desk.

He watched the detonation from a safe distance, with his co-conspirator and the general of the intelligence service at his side, then flew back to Berlin full of enthusiasm to trigger "Valkyrie."

It must have been a shock for this general when he realized that his victim was only slightly injured, "but he was shameless enough to congratulate him anyway. Warning his co-conspirators in Berlin seemed too dangerous to him. They were probably willing to command soldiers and give them orders that required them to risk their lives. But they themselves were not prepared to do so; they all considered themselves too important.

No one had the courage to confront him openly with weapons. Instead of beginning their journey into history with a manly deed, they had attempted to bring down their commander-in-chief through treachery. Only self-sacrifice offered them the sole opportunity to distinguish themselves from the cowardly criminal.

How did they justify their breach of oath, who gave them the right to commit assassination and overthrow the government at this time of extreme tension and distress, at this time of bitter fighting on all fronts? They sought justification in the pretense that they were acting in the interests of higher human goals! And they saw Churchill and Roosevelt, even Stalin, as the guarantors of these goals! They said that for the sake of the higher goals of humanity, the blood sacrifice of German soldiers and their comrades was justified.

After the assassination attempt, he insisted that he be presented with all the results of the investigations, all statements and declarations made by the conspirators, without any embellishment or whitewashing. He wanted to be informed in detail about the group of people involved and their motives, and he was also interested in the operational plan for the coup after "Walküre." But he soon came up against a brick wall!

The first statements made by those who imagined themselves to be in power were lies, he said, and they had presented these lies to the nation and the Wehrmacht.

After what they believed to be a successful assassination attempt, they did not have the courage to admit to it.

Mr. Fellgiebel had not succeeded in cutting off all telephone connections. He had been able to speak to Dr. Goebbels and to the major of the Berlin guard battalion "Großdeutschland," who had put an end to the whole affair. The coup had collapsed, the conspirators had not had a single company behind them.

Who gave them the right to commit assassination and overthrow the government? The front expressed its outrage with one voice. The front-line soldiers could not understand how officers could be capable of such an act. The consequences and repercussions were clear to the front, and its verdict was unequivocal: it would be at our expense, and only the enemy would benefit. The reaction of the people's emergency community was unanimous rejection of assassination and subversion. Concern and mistrust had arisen.

Neither the nation nor the Wehrmacht could have given the conspirators the right to commit assassination and subversion, let alone rebellion and treason!

The investigations and statements show that the conspirators had not thought things through; egocentric behavior had led to an euphoric assessment of the political situation; for example: first we will get rid of the dictator and, with "Walküre," his party, then the Allies will already be coming to meet us!

Allies will come to meet us! And then again these vague phrases about higher ideals of humanity, to which one must make every sacrifice, as their conscience demanded.

But his writings also served as justification for their actions. Rather than reading *Mein Kampf*, many of his party comrades had leafed through the book. They found sentences in it that they believed they could reinterpret to fit their shabby worldview. Since he was leading the nation, the substance of the people, to ruin, he conceded to them in *Mein Kampf* the right to prevent this from happening through resistance, rebellion, and overthrow. It was therefore not only their right, but their duty to eliminate him, the tyrant, as they read in *Mein Kampf*.

He would face the criticism of the people at any time! It was not he who had led the people into hardship, but the openly declared will to destroy them on the part of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin and their great ally, international Jewry. The reactionaries and the conspiratorial clique had encouraged this intention to destroy, and they were well on their way to plunging the nation beyond hardship and into ruin through coups and assassinations.

No, he denied these gentlemen the right to high treason, to rebellion, even the right to assassination! For where had they ever shown the strength to reshape a state according to the compelling demands of the war and the century? Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, and a few Jews were certainly in no position to realize the "higher goals of humanity."

were something that Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, and a few Jews were sure to achieve. It was therefore not necessary to sacrifice German blood through treachery and betrayal.

He asked himself again and again where their ideas were. What did they have to offer the nation? Only their names and their supposed integrity? Both had been torn to shreds by their behavior!

A revolution that simultaneously triggers enthusiasm, popular power, and a willingness to make sacrifices can be built up into a great wave. In the long run, however, it cannot be sustained or preserved.

But even the outbreak of a revolution depended on the personalities behind it and their authority, on their thoughts and ideas, whether they were understood, took root, and whether they were in tune with the mood of the people and the spirit of the times.

His path to becoming leader of the nation was proof of this harmony with the sentiments of the people. Those responsible for the assassinations, the cowardly resistance, and the betrayal were rudimentary manifestations of a past they themselves did not understand.

Until now, it had been simply inconceivable to him that a German officer — even a general — could commit treason. Treason in wartime, to the detriment of the German people, at the expense of German soldiers fighting in battle? Impossible!

The day would come when he would be able to say clearly and unequivocally who had started this war, who ... As long as the fighting continued, he could not speak, "the shock would be too much for the German people and the front."

For a leading soldier, the most important thing was character. Intelligence was not above that; only character and strength of will were decisive when it came to withstanding harsh blows of fate. Courage, bravery, and willingness to make sacrifices were among the prerequisites for a leading soldier. He demanded all of this from his soldiers at all times. He should and must be a role model in this regard, and even more than that, he must be able to give strength and convince others!

When he had to acknowledge the surrender of Paulus and the generals, he said: Now they will go downhill, into the depths of misery; for them, treason is just a fiction. Strength of character is not their strong point, but rather self-esteem. self-importance was more likely. They would try to play a role with the Russians and lose their integrity in the process. It would not be long before we heard them on Russian propaganda radio. They would follow the path of moral bankruptcy, step by step, until they renounced their soldierhood. They would forget that they bore a name that carried obligations.

There had been some employees here, even generals, who thought that was impossible. He had said, "Yes, sooner or later, and all the way to field marshal!" He would never forgive himself for doing that to Paulus! Here was a man leading an army that was fighting and dying, and the man to whom this army, these soldiers, had been entrusted was going down heroically with his soldiers? The meaning of this struggle, the heroism and sacrifice of tens of thousands of brave soldiers, officers, and generals would lose its validity, trampled underfoot by the man who was supposed to be their role model.

He would go to Moscow, and we would hear about it on the radio!

He said that, and he was right. But he could not have imagined that such a mess as this so-called "National Committee for a Free Germany" under Seydlitz-Kurzbach would come about!

In the end, he felt like York in Tauroggen! Seydlitz and his creatures did not understand that they had committed themselves to the Bolsheviks; they simply did not understand because their thinking and ideas were rooted in the 19th century. They had learned nothing from anything.

They did not realize that we were fighting a war of life and death, which was not limited to the soldiers, the people, the nation... They could not imagine that we were engaged in a fateful struggle, a revolutionary struggle for the survival of Europe... a struggle for and for

a new basis for life, against destruction and against the forces that wanted to annihilate us all.

If we still had such schizophrenic idiots who thought: We'll do it with the Russians... we'll lay down our arms, with all honor... we'll hand over our swords, which Marshal Stalin or whoever will then honorably return... yes, they would still be living in this world! Then we'll make peace with them—that's how these idiots imagined it—and those oriented toward the West would think similarly.

Would it be surprising that confidence is waning? That the allies, the neutrals, are losing trust? And would we be surprised at the demand for "unconditional surrender"?

What would the front lines think, the soldiers who were being urged to desert, sabotage, betray, and refuse orders by these tracts of cowardly wretchedness? Tracts signed with the names of former commanders. We had to overcome the moral crisis.

They wanted to end the war and subject the nation to "unconditional surrender." That this would have handed the soldiers on the Eastern Front over to the Russians didn't bother them!

He would have been freed from all his hardships, worries, oppressive responsibilities, and sleepless nights if Stauffenberg's treachery had succeeded in 1945.

. But what would have been the consequence? Chaos and destruction on the fronts! Hatred, fratricidal war, and despair.

They didn't get it: it wasn't about him and National Socialism, it was about Germany! Churchill made it clear and cynical: it was about destroying Germany! Where's the political foundation for a conspiracy that wanted to make history? They had come together in strange combinations: reactionaries, liberals, Marxists, representatives of the church, with the "Confessing Church" particularly distinguished—they even prayed that Germany would lose the war.

He must not forget the diplomats! And the generals! He could not expect his generals to understand him, but he could demand that they obey his orders.

None of them had understood that we were living in a time of change and had to fight a battle for our destiny. Instead of serving the nation in accordance with their oath, they were engaged in destruction, sabotage, and subversion. The conspirators had no right to overthrow the government, but by even attempting to do so, they had shaken the trust of the people:

From the first year of the war, I had suspected treason, often even felt it physically, ... I am sure that this treason began much earlier. Now, after the assassination, the evidence of ongoing treason lies before us. But still not all the traitors have been identified. What harm they have done to us!

Discussions about Dr. Morell

Führer Headquarters Wolf's Lair ? Late autumn 1944

Once again, I was summoned to headquarters to report on my work in Linz. I had a few concerns of my own that needed to be clarified. I wanted to talk to Bormann about the construction of the tunnel system in the rock massif behind the Berghof on the Obersalzberg. He had given me instructions to expand this system and had set binding deadlines that required the increased deployment of mining personnel, which I did not have at my disposal. In addition, I also lacked construction steel for the security spray concreting of the tunnels and caverns. Speer had blocked the quotas necessary for the construction on the Obersalzberg, which had brought the discord between him and Bormann into the open. The total allocation of labor and building materials for Bavaria and the Danube floodplains was scarce, and the situation was extremely tense. As construction supervisor and OT task force leader, I was responsible for this area. The construction volume was too large in relation to the quotas allocated to me, and it was also affected by enemy action. In addition, there were encroachments on labor and local materials by the special structures of the "Jägerstab," over which I had no influence; they were directly subordinate to Speer and Dorsch.

on labor and local materials by the special construction units of the "Jägerstab," over which I had no influence, as they were directly subordinate to Speer and Dorsch.

It was impossible for me to supply the buildings on the Obersalzberg ordered by Bormann over Speer's head with the necessary labor and materials. I now wanted the immediate allocation of the required contingents, not at the expense of other construction projects in my area.

When I arrived at headquarters, I learned that Adolf Hitler was ill.

I therefore first sought out Bormann to inform him and myself. Bormann said that I should be well aware that all construction measures he had ordered on the Obersalzberg were being carried out on the Führer's instructions. He was merely conveying his orders. Mr. Speer knew this very well; his attempt to halt these necessary protective structures was ultimately a deliberate affront. For this tunnel system was not only an air-raid precaution for the Führer and his staff in the event of a possible relocation of headquarters to the mountain, but the caverns were also intended for the safe storage of documents.

He would sort out this tiresome matter. It was just a shame that the Führer had to be bothered with such trifles and that this was causing unnecessary friction. Incidentally, the Führer knew that I was here and wanted to speak to me: Go over to him right away!

Adolf Hitler was lying on a camp bed in a windowless cell in his bunker. At the head of the bed was a low table with a pile of reports, messages, situation maps, a few books, and a telephone. Above it hung a movable wall lamp, the white-gray concrete walls reflected the light and gave the small room the unreality of a tomb. The fresh air from the quietly humming ventilation system fought against the typical concrete smell of the bunker.

Adolf Hitler switched on the ceiling light, put aside a report and his pencil, took off his glasses, and shook my hand: "Good morning, Giesler, take the chair there and sit down next to me. You see me in a pitiful state, but I have survived this too, and tomorrow I will be able to get up again.

To add to all the trouble, I was also caught up in the doctors' quarrel. Morell was under fire, accused of treating me wrongly just when I fell ill and needed him. The surgeons took action against him, basing their case on the assessments and arguments of internists whom I do not know, because they remained in hiding. Unbelievable, to do this to me!

I was in a bad way, I had stomach cramps with pain, colicky symptoms, and a kind of jaundice on top of that. Morell

was a nervous wreck, I had to cheer him up. I know you don't like him, for reasons I understand but overlook, but he's a good doctor and he's helping me!

Providence has assigned me this task, the futile attempts to save

Not only could the last one have ended my life, but the fact that I survived is a sign of providence for me. I should be grateful that I can continue to fight this battle.

Personally, selfishly speaking, my death would only be a release from worries and sleepless nights, which are also caused by my poor health and constant nervous strain. It would be easy for me to take my own life. Just a fraction of a second, and I would be freed from everything!

But I see the outcome of the vile assassination attempt as confirmation of my mission. There can be no doubt about my unyielding will. But it is better that you tell me about your work now! How far has the model of Linz progressed? Have you brought any plans with you? First, tell me briefly about the main points of your war-related construction projects.

I gave a brief report and mentioned the discrepancy between the construction volume deemed necessary and the shortage of labor and materials.

This was the case everywhere, and the deadlines that had been bindingly promised to him were slipping, including those for the controversial large fighter aircraft buildings! I had been right in my fear that the deadlines would not be met. But nevertheless, after all the effort and expense in manpower and materials, these buildings had to be completed quickly; we needed the bomb-proof workrooms for production essential to the war effort. He had no intention of releasing Speer and Dorsch, who were responsible for these buildings, from their obligations.

He had received a message from Bormann: The tunnel system at the mountain. This diversion was necessary. The furnishing materials would only last for a short time:

Let the Berghof be bombed, ? the tunnel system is all the more important, it must not be seen merely as an air-raid precaution. Apart from that, it is not fear that forces me into the bunker, and it is not fear that keeps me from visiting the front, but the certainty that no one else has the steadfastness necessary to see this war through to victory.

But now tell me about Linz! I'll look at your drawings in the next few days when I'm back on my feet. Be prepared to stay here for some time—it's the only distraction I have!

I told him about the plans for "his" Linz, about the solutions we had found for various buildings, about questions that needed to be discussed with him, until he had to turn his attention back to military matters.

I went back to Bormann to find out about the doctors' disagreement. I had always had the impression that Bormann shared my sympathy for Dr. Karl Brandt. Bormann said that Karl Brandt had certainly raised his concerns about Morell's treatment and medication responsibly and in good faith. But he was, after all, a surgeon, and he had relied on the opinions of internists he knew, perhaps even having them analyze the medications in question.

He considered the interference of these internists to be reckless, arguing that the Führer was not their patient and that only a thorough examination could be the prerequisite for a critical assessment of Morell's therapy. It would be easier to get the architects to agree—and that was saying something!—than the doctors. Here, the doctrines were sharply opposed.

But I, too, was biased against Morell! Well, he admitted that he was not an aesthetic appearance, but did that matter? Yes, it did! And my aversion was justified: I had once had to be examined by Morell, which had been arranged when I was assigned to Munich and often sat at the Führer's table.

So one morning I arrived sober with my accessories at Morell's practice on Kurfürstendamm. It was a sloppy place with strange patients waiting there. A young doctor took charge of me. He was unkempt, smelled of cigarettes and whisky, had yellow nicotine-stained fingers, and drew blood from me for the carbolic mice. He even allowed me to stick out my tongue. I was served a glass full of plaster paste or something similar, and then my basic training was complete, and the maestro took me under his wing.

He poked and prodded me, listened and took X-rays. On a couch, defenseless and at his mercy, he pressed his fists into my stomach and his hairy sausage fingers under my ribs, all with a charming smile

? he is undoubtedly a good-natured person ? with sweat on his forehead and a creaking leather corset. He examined every detail of me, but

he found nothing to cut off or that needed to be resoled. After some time, a hefty bill arrived.

I've already told the boss: Morell smells like...

I told Bormann, but now, writing from memory, it would be a bit harsh to repeat the comparison. Bormann grimaced and said, "You can allow yourself all kinds of mockery, even with the boss, but only because he knows there's no malice behind it. What did the Führer say about it?"

He said, 'Giesler, I don't keep Morell here for his pleasant smell; he's a doctor, he's supposed to help me, and that's what he does!

But there are certainly many capable doctors, I said to Bormann, so why him in particular? Bormann interrupted me: He consulted various doctors, but Morell helped him back then, and quickly! His condition was serious

, he couldn't eat anything except oatmeal and steamed carrots, and eventually he couldn't even tolerate that. It wasn't an organic disease that could be quickly diagnosed. I think it was the constant stress, from building up the party to taking overall responsibility, which, as they say, had taken its toll on his stomach, and the result was...

Bormann left the sentence unfinished. Then he continued:

Well, Morell undoubtedly helped him, and that naturally led to the trust he now enjoys. It was therefore foolish and completely inappropriate to question Morell's therapy, ? and I'm putting that mildly!

Please stay out of it, despite your sympathy for Karl Brandt, the

You refer to them as your "Hellenes." Once again, Giesler, seriously, don't cause us any trouble, stick to your field!

Reflections

The interaction between England and Soviet Russia Führer

Headquarters Wolf's Lair ? Autumn 1944

The topics of the evening and nighttime conversations with Adolf Hitler in late fall 1944 arose from my urban planning tasks. Although dealing with such problems may have served to relax Hitler, they also offered him the opportunity to determine the future design of these cities from an unusual perspective. His views, ideas, and suggestions were significant and found their way into my plans.

The evening conversations were not always limited to urban planning, architecture, and technology. Sometimes these topics were overshadowed by serious military or political events. A discordant discussion of the situation could also lead to a retort from Hitler and trigger reflections that made me feel that I was his confidant in what he openly expressed.

One evening, he spoke about the beginning of the war and hinted at the considerations that had led him to sign the treaty with Stalin in August 1939. He wanted to prevent the impending encirclement of Germany and saw this treaty as the last chance to resolve the Danzig and Corridor issues peacefully.

For years, he continued, he had tried to win Poland over to the European community of destiny; reason dictated that Poland should join the defensive wall against Bolshevism. He assumed that every Polish division would strengthen the fighting power against a not only possible but already looming onslaught of Bolshevism against Europe. Those responsible at Versailles had masterfully driven a seemingly insurmountable wedge between Germany and Poland: Danzig and the Corridor! The

They had discarded the democratically lined cloak of "self-determination" whenever it became inconvenient for them.

He said that it was self-evident to him that the Polish state must have free access to the Baltic Sea. He had therefore sought a settlement along these lines, accompanied by a relaxation and detoxification of relations.

It was by no means in our interest to border directly on Bolshevik Russia, and he also saw the value of the agreement he had concluded with Marshal Pilsudski at that time.

But Pilsudski's warnings to the Polish people had been lost amid the Allied promises and chauvinistic agitation.

Until March 1939, he had still hoped for a settlement with Poland, but Chamberlain's guarantee declaration had made all efforts to achieve this settlement or even a friendship pact with Poland futile. Poland had been in the camp of the Western powers. He saw only an agreement with Russia as a way of preventing complete encirclement by the Western powers.

England's diplomats had already attempted to strengthen the encirclement by the power factor Russia. He had become aware that without Russia, the Polish problems, which were developing into an open threat, could no longer be solved.

Nevertheless, he had once again sought a solution through reason.

His offer to the Polish government was not only generous, but went to the very limits of what was acceptable to Germany. Only he himself could make such an offer, which was sincerely intended to serve peace, contrary to the legally justified interests of the German people.

But the Poles, incited by the warmongers, insisted on the injustice created by Versailles. They felt secure thanks to the nonsensical guarantee given by England and France.

Today, he was convinced that Stalin was one of these warmongers acting out of cold calculation, playing a devilish double game—maintaining contractual ties with us while winking at the Western powers.

Our treaty with Stalin did not persuade the Poles to give in or to seek a peaceful settlement of the Danzig and Corridor problems. Even the war, which was now inevitable due to the constant provocations and persecution of ethnic Germans in the Polish territory of Versailles,

was not localized by the pact.

Even at that time, he had sensed the emergence of reactionary tendencies, not only from military sources, but also from diplomatic and ecclesiastical connections with the enemy. But he had no idea of the villainy of which this scum of the German people was capable. The extent of their perfidy, combined with their folly and complete misjudgment of the world situation, only became apparent later, and the connections were only revealed by the assassination attempt.

Until the final, massive snub that the Polish leadership allowed itself at the end of August 1939, he could not have imagined that they would allow it to come to a fight.

Sober reflection must have led the Poles to the following conclusions:

1. That Germany's claim to Danzig was justified, because Danzig was a German city;
2. The corridor issue must be resolved, and the proposal to hold a vote is correct.
3. The alternatives offered for a final and peaceful settlement are at the very limit of what is reasonable for Germany;
4. After the conclusion of the German-Russian treaty, Poland is in a hopeless situation from a military point of view;
5. Neither the guarantee declaration by England nor any further assurances on the part of England and France can change this. For Poland would be crushed in a matter of weeks between the power blocs of Germany and Russia.

Something must have stood in the way of these facts, encouraging the Poles to behave as they did. Either British perfidy, which made Poland risk war, or the British hint at the promised overthrow, at its elimination by the reactionary clique with a subsequent coup.

This explains the multifaceted wishful thinking. The reactionaries: "If you stand firm, we'll get rid of him," the British: "This is how we'll deal with Germany and the Nazis, let's use the Poles," and the Poles:

"Yes, if that's the case, we'll be in Berlin in a few weeks."

When England and France declared war on us in September 1939, they were not concerned about Poland at all; the guarantee agreement merely provided them with the excuse they were looking for:

war between European nations, which corresponded exactly to Lenin's prophecy. Stalin used the now inevitable battle against Poland to clear the Soviet Union's western border. After we had defeated Poland militarily, Stalin effortlessly took care of the rest from the east and finally liquidated over 10,000 officers and leaders in the Katyn Forest.

He was terribly affected by reports of the brutality of the Poles against the ethnic Germans in the corridor and in the border areas, who had been rounded up and killed, partly before and partly after the fighting began. It was unbelievable how the constant incitement had led to such an outburst of hatred: there were more ethnic Germans who had been beaten to death and tortured to death than German soldiers who had fallen in fierce combat. This had now determined his attitude toward Poland.

Then Adolf Hitler spoke again about the German-Russian agreement. This treaty had given us backing, he said, and we could have gained time. But Stalin had also wanted to gain time when he concluded the pact with us.

pact with us. With the guarantee agreement, England had made any peaceful and reasonable settlement impossible and wanted to provoke war.

Stalin also wanted war, but without getting involved in it right away. His clever moves were aimed at the unrest in Europe and the weakening of Germany: We were supposed to get bogged down in this war, and Russia wanted to take advantage of that.

In accordance with the old tsarist and now Leninist-Stalinist objectives, the Soviets had gained their western foothold in Europe with the partition of Poland. When our forces were tied up in the west, they annexed the Baltic states, occupied Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, ... they had not been squeamish, turning areas of interest into annexations.

After the French campaign—Stalin had certainly expected prolonged fighting—he initially counted on our attack on England, while England had counted on Russia. Stalin had been lying in wait, his time had come, and this "time" was linked to the vast Russian-Asian space. We had neither, neither time nor space! And both were crucially linked!

Stalin? No, Russia, since Peter the Great, wanted even more space: Russia wanted the Balkans, only as a "sphere of interest," of course, as it had previously wanted the Baltic states. Russia wanted Bulgaria as a "sphere of interest"; it wanted, quite unselfishly, of course, to gain access to the Aegean Sea; it wanted bases in the Dardanelles.

Stalin's demands now stretched from Finland to the Aegean Sea, as a "springboard" for the Bolshevik world revolution, or were these the old Russian imperialist power goals since Peter the Great?

If he had complied with what Molotov demanded in Stalin's name, it would have been a betrayal of Europe! The fate of the West was now at stake, whose disintegration and downfall had been prophesied by Spengler in the 1920s. He saw his task as winning over the German people, ? more, the entire European substance, for a powerful social revolution. He wanted to thwart the openly declared intention of Lenin and his successor to Bolshevize Europe with the help of Asia. He wanted to prevent the West from sinking into different varieties of Marxism. Social reconstruction could only be achieved within the framework of a nation, a community of the people, and not with the help of international, divisive, and class-warfare Marxism. Socialism based on Marxism divided the nation, that is, the whole as the only possible bearer of social thought, from the ground up. We had seen where division led: to party cliques.

the Social Democrats, the Independents, right up to the Communists. But the same applies to the errors of liberalism. Neither can be the expression of our century, ? it would be a relapse, worse than in the days of the Bourbons. For us and our century, there is only the synthesis of nation and socialism.

Adolf Hitler continued, saying that behind Stalin's demands, which Molotov had coldly and harshly communicated to him during his visit to Berlin in 1940, lay the increasingly obvious military threat on our eastern border, on the eastern border of Europe. Initially, there had been 150 Russian divisions, opposed by only a thin veil of available German forces. In any case, Stalin, with his armies on the march, could have cut us off from raw materials vital to the war effort at any time.

. He was in the favorable position of being able to wait and prepare and negotiate with the Western powers.

If we had continued to fight England, his price would have risen even higher, ? the price he was not willing to pay! But the Allies! Any price that other parts of Europe would have to pay would be accepted by the Western clique. In their blindness, they knew only one goal: the destruction of Germany, which some imagined of Richelieu, others according to their balance of power, and the rest out of senseless hatred.

When our attack on England, which reason and European thinking had forbidden, did not take place, Stalin began his attempt to destroy the Balkan states. He stirred up trouble and instigated a coup d'état to create chaos in Romania. The conditions for this were favorable for him, because Italy had plunged the Balkans into turmoil. New theaters of war were to emerge and divide our forces.

While he had been trying to win the Balkans over to the European idea, or at least to keep them quiet and neutralize them, the Italians had now attacked Greece without saying a word to us—a senseless adventure! When he arrived in Florence after the disappointments of Hendaye and Montoire, he was confronted with this madness.

And the Italians had not even been able to hold their ground in Cyrenaica! Their attack in Greece had been unsuccessful, not so much because of the unfavorable weather conditions as because of the brave Greek defense. Of course, it had to be taken into account that the Italian attack had also been prompted by deliberate snubs and violations of neutrality on the part of Greece.

There was a typically English infamy behind this, to expand the war and thus create a new theater of war that would distract attention from their island empire. The English landed troops in Crete and, at the same time,

on the Greek mainland, with some 70,000 soldiers from their elite units alone. At first, he said, his decision to attack Greece was merely a reminiscence of the Roman Empire. But now he was also aware of the devious intentions of Ciano. He had never trusted him and was convinced that the Duce had succumbed to the influence of his cunning nephew in this fateful decision.

He now feared that Yugoslavia, pressured by England and also by the Russians, would take on the role that had previously been intended for Czechoslovakia. That is why he breathed a sigh of relief when, in the spring of 1941, he was able to conclude the treaty that he hoped would secure our southern flank.

Things turned out differently, however, when a few days later the coup d'état took place in Belgrade. Here, once again, albeit covertly, the joint action of the English and Russian leadership that had orchestrated this coup became apparent. The Yugoslav government was overthrown and the armed forces were mobilized against Germany.

Just as it had become necessary in 1940 to secure our northern flank as far as the North Cape, partly because of raw materials, so now, against his will, it was necessary to secure our southern flank for the same reasons. This made the Balkans a theater of war for us.

A new front emerged, troops and forces were tied down, and losses in human lives and material were incurred, and valuable, indeed decisive, time was lost. We were to learn this the hard way!

In the meantime, a threatening deployment of Soviet divisions and armies had been completed on the German and Romanian eastern borders. There was no more hesitation; our preemptive strike hit the battle-ready Soviet armies. Our attack came as no surprise to the Russian leadership. Rather, we were surprised by the deployment of deeply echeloned armies, the strength of their artillery, and especially the incredible concentration of their tanks, the robust, powerful

T 34s.

This attack not only marked the beginning of the war on two fronts that he had wanted to avoid, but also the start of a battle that had to be fought on all fronts. He had always believed that we should never allow ourselves to be drawn into such a battle.

The Napoleonic campaign in Russia also loomed large before his eyes as a threat and a deterrent: "Do not doubt that I had carefully thought through all the phases of this war, all the experiences Napoleon had to go through in Russia!"

Why, then, did we attack? We were doomed to this struggle; this battle is our destiny. The only thing we could still decide for ourselves was

was the timing of the attack. And even the choice of the moment that was favorable for us was no longer in our hands.

Especially after developments in the Balkans, the Russian threat meant that there was no longer any hope of attacking the British Isles. We had been prevented from attacking England in Gibraltar. Suez only made sense in connection with Gibraltar. Time was against us, and we had to try to avoid a protracted war at all costs. If England was now pinning its hopes on the Red Army before America's active intervention, which had already been promised, took effect, then our only option was to eliminate the Red Army in order to persuade the Western powers to make peace. Within a foreseeable period of time, this Red Army had to be crushed and Russia defeated in order to avoid a real war on several fronts.

Another consideration had determined his decision. It was equally important for the future of Germany and Europe to confront the Bolshevik threat. We could not allow ourselves to be drawn into defending German territory! Only a preemptive strike would make it possible to fight the battle in the vast expanses of Russia.

He had no doubt about this; it would be a struggle for existence: this struggle could only be won with the united strength of the community and with the hard, unyielding will of the entire German people. I repeat what I said at the beginning of the war: if we form this community, then our united will and our unity will overcome every hardship.

But in this, in unity, I was mistaken, because I

I underestimated the reactionary forces: those responsible for this betrayal do not recognize the significance and inevitability of this struggle for Germany and Europe. Imposed defensiveness

Führer Headquarters Wolf's Lair ? Late autumn 1944

Adolf Hitler lamented the almost complete loss of offensive power: The fact that we had to fight defensively on all fronts was the result of the terrible situations that had inevitably arisen since Stalingrad. First, the confidence and then the will to fight of the Italian, Romanian, and Hungarian troops, which were extremely unstable and vulnerable, waned.

Added to this was the disruption of the front from outside by emigrants in the service of the enemy, by deserters, and by the Hiwis in the so-called National-Komi- 466

under the leadership of former General Seydlitz-Kurzbach. I will spare myself the names of the other members of this repulsive rabble.

Much worse and more dangerous, however, was the disintegration from within and the now obvious treason, which was like blood poisoning.

It began with the destruction of diplomats and reactionaries in the General Staff.

And it continued with underhandedness and absurd ideas that resembled tall tales, and ended in the worst, unimaginable betrayal of the fighting front and the homeland threatened by bombs, and that at a high level.

absurd ideas that resembled tall tales, and ended in the worst, unimaginable betrayal of the fighting front and the homeland threatened by bombs, ? and that at the highest military level!

Once again, the risk of an offensive, ? the "citadel" had been carefully planned and prepared, but without success. He had had a bad feeling from the start, even though the extent of the betrayal had not yet been apparent to him at the time.

Wherever our attack forces were deployed, they encountered massive resistance, well-developed, deeply staggered defense zones, and even counterattacks aimed precisely at the joints. This could not have been the result of good reconnaissance alone; the Russians were familiar not only with our strategic planning, but also with our tactical planning!

Since the fall of 1939, if not earlier, it had not been possible to keep even a single decision secret! Since only high-ranking officers were involved in the planning of operations and the transmission of orders, the betrayal could only have come from this quarter. The interrogations after the assassination attempt shed light on this incredible web of treachery.

New weapons systems had been developed, tested, and put into production. At all times, he had pushed for accelerated development and production at the highest level. He had been given promises of time, binding deadlines, but they had not been kept. In the meantime, people had become more cautious . . .

Nevertheless, he was being fed false information and presented with Potemkin villages, and there was sabotage, which was only being investigated in isolated cases. Worse was the obvious betrayal, he said, as evidenced by the targeted heavy air strikes on weapons development centers.

He was thinking of the carpet bombing of an extremely important development plant, which cost the lives of hundreds of researchers, engineers, and skilled workers. This targeted attack—which could only have been triggered by treason—set back the deployment of the new weapon system by a year!

This weapon was missing during the period before and during the invasion, he said, because it was a strategic weapon of decisive importance in the war. It was to be used at the beginning of 1 the invasion, he said, adding that it was a strategic weapon of decisive importance for the war. It was to be deployed at the beginning of 1944 against England in general, but above all against the invasion base on the English coast

to decimate the forces already in place! I knew that Peenemünde was meant and with it the development of rocket weapons.

He had been lied to about many things, given incomplete information, ? what could he believe, what could he rely on? Sabotage had also taken place in the General Quartermaster's department, for example in the supply of weapons and ammunition, fuel for tanks and aircraft.

When it came to supplying encircled combat units with ammunition and high-quality food, the transport planes, which were exposed to enemy defenses on every flight, had fish meal on board! And useless junk that was only suitable for the rear echelons!

When new weapon systems were submitted to him for development approval or demonstrated to him, he would ask: When will they be ready for use? Because we cannot afford weapon systems whose development and production take longer than we are able to survive a war; they would only burden the production of tried and tested weapons. Such development could be promoted to a limited extent if he recognized that the systems could be of great importance. But he then regretfully noted that they would come too late for decisive military action.

Years ago, brilliant researchers made a revolutionary discovery in the field of physics that will have an impact far beyond our century. It will also be of great military significance and could change the world! But what does it matter? There is always "time," and with it the incredible pressure that we cannot escape and that weighs on all the decisions we have to make.

Once again, our units on the Eastern Front had been engaged in fierce defensive battles this summer, which had become the greatest test of endurance due to the powerful offensive strikes by the Russians. This was followed by the collapse of Army Group Center, the Allied invasion in the west had gained ground, the treacherous assassination, the collapse of the Western Front... All this could not be seen in military terms alone; one must also consider the political implications. We should not be surprised that doubts arose, that allies defected, that neutrals turned against us. Could we blame them for drawing conclusions based solely on the betrayal within our own ranks

own ranks, when they knew before we did that our own defense and parts of our intelligence service were working for the enemy?

Defensive resistance saps the strength of the troops, costs us time, and allows the enemy to increase its material superiority.

It is a mistake to assume that offensive action requires higher losses than defensive resistance, provided, of course, that the element of surprise is maintained. Moreover, attack is more in keeping with the nature of the German soldier than defense. We must therefore return to the offensive. But not in the east, because even a major success would hardly be noticed in that vast area.

In contrast, the situation on the Western Front requires an offensive thrust. Here, the immediate danger to the Ruhr region must first be countered. A successful attack in the west would lead to a relaxation of the front by destroying American divisions.

At the same time, our activity would be of great psychological importance, not only for the fighting troops, but also for the German people.

The enemy would, in Bavarian terms, have the wind taken out of its sails. But it was also important to regain the space from which our retaliatory weapons, the rockets, could be used effectively.

He had therefore decided to go on the offensive in the west as soon as weather conditions were favorable for us, which meant that the enemy's air force would be hampered.

The end

The Colonel General

In the fall of 1943, I spoke with Colonel General Jodl about Demjansk and the catastrophe and tragedy of Stalingrad.

In the winter of 1941/1942, Russian armies had surrounded a German army corps on the Waldai Heights around Demyansk. Only through the non-stop daily deployment of transport aircraft were the six encircled divisions, numbering around 100,000 soldiers, able to be supplied and kept fit for combat.

They repelled all Russian attacks and tied down five Russian armies in their large-scale defensive positions for a long time. The soldiers in the Demjansk pocket thus prevented a decisive breakthrough by the Soviets against Army Group North.

I was in the area around Plesk and Staraya Russa at the time and took a special interest in the events. During this period, my friend Schulte-Frohlinde flew from the Plesk area with the Ju 52, bringing ammunition and supplies into the pocket and evacuating the wounded. OT units under my command worked with engineers to build bridges, log dams, and positions and laid field railway tracks toward the encirclement. These were necessary preparations for an attack from outside to facilitate the planned breakout from inside.

The main battle line on the land bridge west of the Demjansk pocket had been stabilized and reinforced. Four divisions attacked from the Staraya Russa area to free the encircled army corps. With

uncompromising commitment, the soldiers endured this battle, through swamps and mud and across the Lovat River.

This was a unique achievement by the troops and their leadership, said Colonel General Jodl. It was also unique in the history of warfare that an encircled army corps had sustained a prolonged, all-round defensive battle against a vastly superior force. And it was just as unique as it was unprecedented that an army corps had been supplied for months solely by transport aircraft with everything it needed for combat.

I said that, beyond the historical account of the war, there would probably one day be a saga of Demyansk and Stalingrad, including the bitter aftermath—a new Nibelungen epic of the soldiers. The general replied: "I know where this conversation is leading... but now is not the time for that. Just a few hints.

Colonel General: I know where this conversation is leading... but now is not the time for that. Just a few hints.

The disaster at Stalingrad was triggered by the collapse of the northern flank, but also of part of the southern flank of the 6th Army. These units were unable to withstand the attacks of elite Russian armies. And the Russians were not only interested in encircling the 6th Army in Stalingrad; their strategic goal was much more ambitious, with their armies also advancing on Rostov.

"There is a certain analogy between Yansk and Stalingrad, isn't there?

Certainly, they had much in common. But in his mind, the fortress of Stalingrad had two faces, like a Janus head, fatefully directed toward the spaces and times of the war. On the one hand, it was not just about the position on the Volga and the encircled 6th Army, but also about the fate of the army groups on the southern wing of the Eastern Front, about well over a million soldiers and the territory they held.

On the other hand, I would like to point out that the 6th Army in Stalingrad tied down seven Russian armies for a long time. The rapid release of these enemy forces would certainly have meant disaster for Army Group A, and would also have put Army Group Don and parts of Army Group B in extreme danger. Large parts of the Romanian, Italian, and Hungarian armies had already been overrun by the Russians. It was necessary to seal off these breakthroughs and secure the defensive fronts along the Don.

The battle of the 6th Army had created the conditions for stabilizing the southern wing of the Eastern Front, where huge gaps were gaping: The situation was extremely dangerous!

There was something else connected with Stalingrad: the Volga, the important waterway for transporting oil from Baku and American war supplies from the Persian Gulf. This was initially of secondary importance given the military situation on the southern flank. But all this gave Stalingrad a special strategic dimension and greater spatial dimensions compared to the previous events in Demyansk, even if one added Cholm and the Volkhov breakthrough. However, it was clear from the two focal points of the gigantic battle that the Russians had recognized our strategy for the campaign!

A few more points: There is a difference between supplying 100,000 or 250,000 soldiers from the air and keeping them combat-ready. The distances played a role, as did the depth of the enemy blockade and thus the influence that anti-aircraft guns and fighters could have on the flights of our slow Ju 52s. A crucial but unanswerable question was to what extent and for how long supplies could be considered secure.

For operational reasons, relief of Stalingrad from the west, along the Don, was out of the question. All hopes for relief were therefore pinned on Army Group Hoth, which was to fight its way through a corridor from the southwest. This would have meant freedom of decision and enabled the forces from inside and outside to work together.

Breaking the ring around Stalingrad from the inside alone, with an outbreak of the already weakened troops, abandoning secure positions, leaving the wounded behind, and risking a fight without the support of heavy weapons? That would have been irresponsible!

Operational considerations, not prestige, had kept the 6th Army in Stalingrad. Inadequate and weather-dependent supplies from the Luftwaffe had made it impossible to keep the army combat-ready. In order to supply the heavy weapons with ammunition and provide the encircled forces with fuel and sufficient supplies, a corridor was essential, even for the 6th Army to break out with outside support.

An isolated attempt to break out in the open snow and ice steppe without heavy weapons, through the deeply staggered ring of Russian armies, would have been an act of desperation and would have led to certain destruction. It would have meant the end of the 6th Army, and it would have freed the enemy forces there before the army groups on the southern flank could be secured.

On January 9 or 10, the Russians offered the 6th Army the opportunity to surrender. However, the purpose and goal of this offer were transparent; they wanted to free their armies tied up there in order to throw them against the still unsecured defensive fronts of the army groups. We knew what to make of the terms of surrender. Besides, we were still hoping for enough supplies and a chance to break through.

The detachment of a large combat unit from the enemy – especially in winter – was fraught with all kinds of risks. It would lose its bases, its cover, and the protection of heavy weapons. In the fortified area itself, a division was moved from north to south. The result was tantamount to complete annihilation, because without cover, it was crushed and overrun by the Russians, who immediately pursued them relentlessly. This was an

example on a divisional scale of the risk of a breakout by the entire 6th Army!

Was this the action that we only learned later had been initiated by General Seydlitz on his own initiative? Strange. At Demjansk, the attack divisions that broke through the encirclement from the outside obeyed him.

"I must get back to work," said the colonel general with a serious expression.

The conversation about "Demjansk-Stalingrad" was not finished.

But the general had said the essential about the inevitable outcome of the fateful battle, and his words were marked by deep seriousness.

Whenever the opportunity arose, I sought out the general because of the objectivity and conciseness with which he explained military operations.

The brave fighting and sacrifice of the soldiers at Stalingrad were followed by the triumphant cries of the Allies. Out of arrogance and blindness, triumph and hatred found expression in the inflexibility of the "unconditional surrender," the demand for unconditional capitulation.

In November 1944, I heard some critical remarks from the general on this subject: no soldier with a sense of responsibility could agree to such a surrender; it was dishonorable. Knowing all the conditions and intentions of the enemy, the only option was bitter resistance. This had nothing to do with fanaticism, but arbitrariness could only be met with determination, even in a hopeless situation.

I learned many years later, when I read the transcripts of the Nuremberg trials, what military considerations lay behind these words.

When asked why Hitler did not surrender in 1944/45, Colonel General Jodl replied:

I did not consider surrendering at that time. That was completely out of the question; no soldier would have done that; it would have been completely pointless...

Not even after the failure of the Ardennes offensive, because the Führer was just as clear about the overall situation as we were, and he was probably clear about it much earlier than we were; so there was no need to say anything to him in that regard...

In the winter of 1944, there were many reasons against it, apart from the fact that the question of surrender or giving up resistance was a matter for the supreme commander alone. The main argument against it was that we had no doubt that there could only be unconditional surrender, because the foreign powers had left us in no doubt about that. And if we had still had any doubts about what lay ahead, they were completely dispelled when we captured the British "Eclipse." The English gentlemen of the commission will know what that is. It was the precise instruction on what the occupying power was to do after the surrender in Germany. Now, unconditional surrender requires that the front lines remain where they were and that the enemy capture those who stood opposite them. The same thing had to happen that happened in the winter of 1941 at Vyazma. Millions of prisoners suddenly had to camp out in the open in winter. Death would have reaped a tremendous harvest and, above all, everything would have been... those three and a half million or so who were still on the Eastern Front would have been...

completely fallen into the hands of the enemy in the East. It was our aim to rescue as many people as possible to the West. This could only be achieved if the two fronts had moved closer together. In any case, these were the purely military considerations that we made in the final stages of the war. I believe that in later years there will be more to say about this than I can and want to say today*!"

"We will win the war!"

It was late at night when Adolf Hitler read the latest reports. One of them caught his particular interest. He said to me that he had noticed time and again that modern technical weapons offered brave soldiers special opportunities to distinguish themselves. Assuming they risked their lives, these weapons would give them outstanding success. However, he had to ensure that the infantryman, the tank grenadier, who often had to fight under much harsher conditions

, were not short-changed in the assessment of their high achievements.

I have long been aware that only a soldier of great stature is entitled to lead the nation once I retire after the war. That is why I tried to get to know everyone whose military performance and manly deeds stood out.

The opportunity to award medals to brave soldiers myself gave me a direct impression of many of them. I was open and attentive to everyone, regardless of which branch of the Wehrmacht they belonged to or what rank they held. I engaged everyone in conversation to get to know their personality, always looking for outstanding soldiers who could one day lead the nation.

Prudent boldness and bravery had to be accompanied by charisma. Intelligent and logical thinking was essential, combined with an interest in modern technology and cultural openness. I was looking for imaginative soldiers with leadership qualities.

This was, of course, exactly what was required of an officer with palpable authority. He had to be convinced that this fight was being fought not only for Germany, but for Europe. He had to be steadfast and, above all, he had to have character.

Adolf Hitler stood up, paced a few steps, and then said, "I found him, the Stuka pilot Rudel!"

I was not surprised; Rudel had long been known throughout the nation for his bravery, his fighting spirit, and his success. He was an officer of high standing and a role model for his soldiers.

I wanted to take him to me, Adolf Hitler continued, as my assistant he should share everything with me, my worries and hopes, ? and not only in the military sphere; for Rudel's humanistic education is also a favorable prerequisite for further tasks.

As a confidant, he was to stand by my side; I wanted to introduce him to all areas of responsibility and convey my views to him. This would have given me the opportunity to get to know him even better, to be sure that he would grow into the leadership of the Reich.

I had to admit that he had more steadfastness than I could have expected.

He has an iron will, and he knows how to enforce it! "I belong on the front line! As long as there is fighting, that is where I belong!" he told me. So far

I haven't been able to keep him here. I can't tell him that I want him to be my successor!

He is very skilled at evading my wishes. He told me straight out: 'I can only accept this honor if I am allowed to return to the front.' He sensed that I understood him, that I admired him and that I did not want to bind him with an order. Hopefully he will stay with us!

One evening, I witnessed an incident that made a deep impression on me. Adolf Hitler placed a pile of reports, which he had read while standing, as usual, on his desk and paced back and forth across the room with deliberate steps. Then he said, "We will win the war!" And he repeated it. After a while, I heard him say again, "We will win the war!"

, I am firmly convinced of it." It was a soliloquy, not directed at me.

He rang for an aide, picked up the pile of reports again, turned to me and said, "Giesler, I expect you after the briefing."

I had the feeling that Adolf Hitler was under great stress. Earlier

, during dinner, I had noticed his absent-minded, pensive behavior. He is still under the strain of previous military discussions, I thought, he is still preoccupied with decisions. Surely the reports had now led him to this "We will win the war."

For some time, I had noticed a change in his demeanor, such as a slight tremor in his left hand, which he covered up with a few jokes, and his restlessness, which bordered on nervousness. He was overworked. The night before, he had given me a hint:

"It's hard for me to sleep. Sleeping pills? Sure, but they only make me tired, they don't help me sleep. Only after lying awake for a long time, usually around 5 or 6 a.m. Even in the dark and silence—I've gotten used to the humming of the air conditioner—I can't fall asleep."

I have the maps of the front lines in front of my eyes, from the armies to the

divisions and regiments... my thoughts search the fronts with concern: something could happen here, something must happen here.

I simply cannot switch off and give in to the need for rest after the nightly briefing. I wait for further reports, whether from the front lines and the bombings or global political news. Over my nightly tea, with conversations about topics that interest me, I think I find relaxation... sometimes, yes... but it depends on what the day has demanded of me.

I'm also quite demanding when it comes to relaxing conversation—urban planning, architecture, and technology are what interest me most... well, you know!

Concern and doubt also overwhelmed me after Stalingrad, then in the huge, mostly formless Eastern territory, after the disastrous collapse of Army Group Center, after the failed defense against the invasion, and also after the assassination attempt of July 20. But every time I spoke with Adolf Hitler, my concerns and doubts were dispelled by the extraordinary fascination and charisma of his personality.

It was not the authority, the power of the head of state, combined with his command over the Wehrmacht, which was enhanced by his unassuming modesty. For me, it was more the matter-of-fact way in which he turned his attention to urban development tasks in the midst of the harsh realities of war, saying things like, "We will build it like this," and it sounded as if 'It's just a pity we can't start tomorrow because adverse circumstances are preventing us.'

It was his conviction that dispelled my concerns and doubts, because he believed that we would win the war. I could not escape his conviction and willpower. Once again, it seems important to me to repeat: When it came to urban planning issues, Adolf Hitler combined imagination with sober consideration before making decisions. Everything was well thought out, ? in my own field, I could imagine a Can we trust his judgment? His pragmatic assessment of the problem was clear and well-reasoned, and he concluded with a confident statement: "This is how we will build it!" Was it any different in the military sphere?

I cannot imagine that his high intelligence and ever alert mind would not have assessed the military situation just as clearly. And I am convinced that the sober and realistic Colonel General Jodl did not need to tell him in late autumn 1944 that military catastrophe was inexorably approaching with each passing day.

Adolf Hitler certainly saw the situation clearly, perhaps better and more sharply than anyone else, because he was able to grasp its entire breadth, across all areas, from raw materials to weapons, from the fighting power of the soldier to strategic planning.

to strategic planning. I am also convinced that

if it had been just about himself, he would not have hesitated a single day longer. What held him back? Relentless stubbornness? No, rather "unconditional surrender."

This cold formula of annihilation could only be answered by unconditional resistance. For this 'unconditional surrender' was not targeted and limited to the elimination of Hitler and the National Socialists; it was not just about the 'system', not just about the armed forces, the officers, 'it was about the German nation, about the whole of Germany, about substance and space. Even if the nation's leadership had emerged from the resistance, even if it had been formed by men 'after God's own heart', ... destruction on a far greater scale than that brought about by the continuation of the struggle would have been inevitable! 'Unconditional surrender'—with this merciless formula, the enemy powers not only prolonged the war, they also ruthlessly sacrificed soldiers, civilians, women, and children, even their own soldiers.

Another idea dominated Adolf Hitler's thinking: he felt far superior to Roosevelt and Churchill. For him, both were rudimentary relics of a bygone era. of a bygone era of the 19th century. In Stalin, on the other hand, he saw a revolutionary who had consistently led Leninist communism to its ultimate conclusion. Now he had become a threat to Europe—he was still "Uncle Joe," but how long would the self-delusion of the Western powers last? This alliance had to break apart, and the fact that it did not is not a credit to Hitler.

But all that means nothing compared to the defiant, compelling words: "We will win the war, I am firmly convinced of that!" Incomprehensible to anyone who did not experience Adolf Hitler and saw him as a nihilist, he was a deeply religious man! His path led him through a turning point in history, and he was convinced that it was his duty to follow this path, that providence had destined him to do so.

More than his penetrating intelligence, he was guided by his faith—in Germany, in himself, and in his mission, but also his belief in 'providence'. And this faith, which had been repeatedly reinforced on his long journey from nothingness to leader of the nation, gave him the strength to be a model of steadfastness and confidence to his colleagues.

The superiority and ruthlessness of the enemy and the dangerousness of the war situation were clear to Adolf Hitler. Every movement of the Weakness must have seemed to him a fatal failure. The incredible strength to resist this weakness could no longer come from rational sources; he drew it from his belief in "providence." How many nights must it have taken him to overcome this before he found peace! I witnessed this process only once.

Farewell – Berlin – February 1945

The Führer keeps talking about your plans for Linz and the model of the Danube embankment development. When will the model be ready, when can you present it to the Führer?

Such calls came from the command bunker of the Reich Chancellery, the last Führer headquarters, from the adjutant's office, and from Bormann. It was during the depressing weeks of January. The Ardennes offensive had failed. It had not led to the strategic success that had been hoped for and that the combative, self-sacrificing efforts of our divisions deserved. In the east, the front lines were faltering under the onslaught of Russian armies, and the threat was growing day by day, not only around us but also above us.

The areas entrusted to me as OT leader, Bavaria and the Danube floodplains, were under heavy bombing. In contrast to the Sisyphean task of repairing the bomb damage, the question that arose in these times of deadly concern and oppression was: When will the model of Linz be finished, when can you present it to the Führer? Was that understandable?

I, at any rate, understood it. Adolf Hitler had appointed me in the fall of 1940 as He was commissioned with the design of Linz and briefed on the task. The hints he gave me in Linz at the time revealed that he had been thinking about redesigning the city and orienting it towards the Danube for a long time, perhaps even since his youth—there were many indications of this.

Whenever the opportunity arose in the later years of the war, the plans for Linz were a topic of conversation. It was the task for peace that, on his instructions, was the only one that was continued during the last years of the war. He often visited me in my studio and discussed partial plans and preliminary models with me and gave instructions. He asked me to visit the headquarters in Winniza and Wolf's Lair for weeks at a time.

Between military meetings, we would draw together, like colleagues, working out the details of the plans. And in the hours when he was waiting for news from the front, we talked about urban planning and architecture. This often happened during times of great tension, times of bitter disappointment.

It always seemed to me that his focus in the planning or in our conversations was solely on the design. Distraction may have been a factor, but it is more likely that he wanted to gain distance by concentrating on creative work in order to achieve clarity for military decisions.

Even in desperate times, he did not abandon the tasks of the future, which, beyond the war, connected him in his thoughts with peace.

For him, it was important to work on the foundations for a new social structure, to shape the environment in line with the challenges of the time, and to solve urban planning problems in the process. Even if the reality—which he was well aware of—spoke against it, he was firmly convinced when he said: "We will win this war despite everything!" And this conviction was rooted in his unshakeable belief in his mission.

That is why I understood his desire to see the model of the redesign of his hometown of Linz, the architectural vision for the development of the Danube riverbank.

Finally, the Linz model was finished. The remaining model builders had worked tirelessly, often into the night, to complete it. The result was an outstanding piece of craftsmanship. Now the extensive model was on display in one of the large, brightly lit basement rooms of the

New Reich Chancellery.

When I led Adolf Hitler into this room, he stood there for a long time, overwhelmed by the overall impression, just looking. I had placed the spotlights

set to shine in the afternoon sun, so that the significant Urfahr development on the river, opposite the Linz side, stood out vividly and impressively in the light. It was just as he had described his architectural vision to me in the fall of 1940. Now he had the same view that his

city on the Danube would appear from his planned retirement home.

He looked at me with a serious expression, then went over to my colleague, the model builder Mehringer, who was still busy with the final assembly work on the model, and thanked him for his outstanding work.

We switched the spotlights to morning lighting, and once again he gave himself over completely to looking, immersed in the overall impression of the model. He could now see the Linz Danube embankment development from the Urfahr side

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What was going through his mind, what thoughts were moving him? Never before had I seen him so serious, so entranced and moved at the same time when looking at a model. I stood aside, still depressed by the events of the war, exhausted, and as I looked at the model, I couldn't help thinking:

"Architecture that was never built."

Looking slowly and intently, Adolf Hitler now walked along the Urfahr side of the model to the head end, where the Danube flowed abruptly from the unspoiled landscape between the wooded mountains into the designed urban space. He bent down and looked downstream. I adjusted the spotlights to midday light so as not to dazzle him. He asked for a chair. Leaning forward, he looked across the river at the horizontal and vertical rhythm of the groups of buildings. He nodded to me. Then he examined the intervals and the proportions of the buildings in relation to the dominant vertical lines.

To my regret, I was distracted by questions from his companions until Bormann, with a wave of his hand and a "later," gave me the opportunity to observe Adolf Hitler again.

He now sat on the Linz side and looked across the river to the "Great Hall" with the Danube Tower, inside which was the planned burial place of his parents, recognizable from the outside by a bronze cenotaph. Adolf Hitler looked at everything attentively, alert, yet lost in a dream, as if he could hear Bruckner's desired glockenspiel motif coming from the tower.

We were left alone, only Bormann stood apart, watching silently, typical in his posture with his arms crossed.

In the days that followed, during the rest of my stay in the command bunker of the Reich Chancellery, I accompanied Adolf Hitler to the Linz model twice a day.

In the afternoon, after lunch, which was often delayed due to the military "situation," and again at night. It was almost

always the same: a long, absorbed, dreamlike gaze at the beginning, followed by a conversation about the details of the buildings and bridges depicted in the model.

At his request, visitors such as Dr. Goebbels or military personnel often took part, provided they were open-minded, as he believed them to be. He showed them the model as if it were a promised land into which we would find entry.

One afternoon, Adolf Hitler said that Dr. Ley had married and that he would be interested to hear about his wife. Then, after a short pause, he told Schaub to arrange for Dr. Ley to invite me so that I could meet Mrs. Ley and tell him about her.

So one evening I was a guest at the Ley home, which, as was customary at the time, also included an air-raid shelter. I conveyed the Führer's greetings with a bouquet of flowers. The main topic of conversation was Linz and the Führer's interest in the architectural model, which impressed Dr. Ley for various reasons. The Führer knew how much he cared about everything he was involved in and what moved him. He was also aware of his interest in architecture and would certainly show him the model of Linz soon, if only because he was responsible for several buildings on the banks of the Danube.

During tea time that night, I told Adolf Hitler about the evening at the Ley residence. During rescue work after a bomb attack, Dr. Ley met his young wife. She had fled from the Russians in the Baltic region. When I spoke to Dr. Ley alone, he told me:

"I saw her in the glow of the fires, and she seemed to me like the return of my wife, whom I had lost." "Giesler, you knew her. Isn't there a striking resemblance?"

Mrs. Ley, I concluded, is a harmonious woman, attentive and modest. She has intelligent eyes and a kind, calm gaze.

???III?IMe_ä_ -

In the Invalidenkirche. June 24, 1940: "Giesler, you will build my tomb."

In front of the Invalidendom. Broker, Giesler, Speer.

The view over the Danube. The Linz commission.

"A long, pensive, dreamlike gaze..." Adolf Hitler at the Linz model. February 1945, Reich Chancellery bunker.

I had the impression that Adolf Hitler was satisfied with my report. A few days later, he showed Dr. Ley the Linz model.

I had detailed discussions with Bormann about the work on the tunnel protection system on the Obersalzberg. The required and probably justified scope of this facility, which was intended as headquarters and also for the Wehrmacht leadership, necessitated a greater deployment of labor and rationed building materials. Speer blocked the project; there were disagreements that did not reflect the importance of these construction measures at the time.

I was the one who suffered when the urgent deadlines could not be met, and I asked Bormann for understanding for my situation. I pointed out to him that even the "hunter's lodges," for which Speer and Dorsch were solely responsible, were already three months behind schedule despite the immediate Reich quota.

You were present when I expressed my concerns and those of my brother to the Führer regarding the locations of these buildings, also because of the consumption of steel and cement, because of the manpower required, but then also because I questioned the deadlines that Dorsch had given as binding. I said at the time that these measures were coming too late. The Führer was angry.

'Speer and Dorsch are responsible for this,' he said, and gave me the following instruction: 'Giesler, you will no longer concern yourself with this matter in future; you will stick to your own duties.'

I followed these instructions. Now, after the debacle with the deadline, employees of Speer and Dorsch are looking for me, asking me to order that the Jägerbauwerke in Landsberg and Mühldorf be shut down!

Unbelievable, said Bormann, and what did you say?

What do you mean? I neither proposed nor planned these large-scale construction projects, nor are they under my authority. You know very well that Dorsch and Speer are responsible for these projects, and only the Führer can make a decision about shutting them down.

They want to pass the buck to you, said Bormann, to wriggle out of their deadline commitment. Stay out of it!

The days of the Yalta Conference arrived. Reports of this reached Adolf Hitler himself before the Linz Model, which was intended to give him some time and distance, albeit only for a short while.

. Sündermann, as deputy press chief, usually delivered the reports written in large letters himself and made statements*. The Führer dictated guidelines and instructions for the press, set appointments with the Foreign Minister and Dr. Goebbels, his gaze hardly ever leaving the model.

During the hours of military tension and discussions, I spoke with the men in Adolf Hitler's inner circle about the

the emerging results of the Yalta Conference. Apparently, as in Wilson's time, agreement had been reached on certain points, but this time without hypocritical pretense, instead with an openly brutal will to destroy.

It was said that Germany had been divided into occupation zones and that it was not yet clear how many National Socialists were to be shot. But they talked about peace-loving peoples, by which they always meant only their own, chattered about the highest goals of humanity and sacred obligations, about secure and lasting peace, about a life for all people and nations free from fear and want: for everything would be good, peaceful

and glorious when Germany was destroyed. A brave soldier from the First World War said mockingly: "Well then, it seems to me that peace will be terrible!"

Did he have any idea what was in store for him? After being seriously wounded in Berlin, he was sent to the Lubyanka in Moscow and spent 10 years in Siberia!

The next evening, I witnessed a deeply shaken Hitler: Dresden! This terrorist attack on the refugee and hospital city of Dresden, conceived and ordered by the great European Churchill, was a terrible blow that made the world sit up and take notice, a gift to Stalin, the destroyer of human beings.

According to reports, well over a million people were in the city, including more than half a million refugees from the Silesian region. In the nighttime attack by countless Allied bombers flying in waves, the city lay helpless, without anti-aircraft protection, in a hail of explosive and incendiary bombs. Then came the last wave of bombers and showered the tormented people who had survived the inferno with phosphorus.

Adolf Hitler listened to the reports with a stony face, standing and reading the reports, leaning over the table, his hands clenched into fists and gripping the papers. He remained silent. Late at night, when the second attack, now on the outskirts of the burning city of Dresden, took place, he said:

This renewed attack is aimed at those who were able to flee from hell.

? The oppressive day is followed by the night of realization: Merciless destruction is imminent!

What was possible after the terrorist attacks in Hamburg, Cologne, Berlin, and who knows where else, in terms of identifying the victims, will be impossible in Dresden. We don't know how many refugees were in the city. Estimates of the number of victims range in the hundreds of thousands.

Above all, it was still possible to find something positive about Europe, but hardly anything positive about Dresden. As after the terrorist attack on Hamburg, I am now thinking back to the situation in 1940. The defeated British and French forces were surrounded in the Flemish plains around Dunkirk.

I acted cautiously, objectively, and responsibly, as a soldier and as a politician. Should I admit that ethical considerations may have played a part in my decision? It is not easy to order the destruction of hundreds of thousands of people. Today, my decision is interpreted as a mistake, as stupidity or weakness. Of course, after years of the degeneration of warfare into acts of cruel destruction, today, after Dresden, I would act differently!

In the battles of the war years, both the fortunate and the difficult and unfortunate ones, I strove for reason. I strove for the maximum possible humanity, as far as this was justifiable in the harshness of war. Nor did I wage a war of extermination against cities and cultural achievements. Neither during the conquest of territory nor during the evacuation, ? whether in Rome, Florence, or Paris. One should not pretend that the preservation of Paris was a credit to the Resistance or even to the Allied forces! If I had considered it sensible to defend the city, it would have been done. And if I had wanted to destroy the city of Paris, a front commander with his division would have been enough!

There is no military justification whatsoever for this terrorist attack on Dresden.

This is about murder and the destruction of a culturally significant city.

This is also referred to in a statement made by Dr. Goebbels at the time: "This is the rage of a Herostratus, the work of a madman who, realizing that he lacks the ability to build a temple, wants to prove to the world that he can at least set it on fire."

To me, this statement was too one-sidedly focused on Dresden as a city of art history. My thoughts and my heart were with the victims. These people had fled the horrors of war, rape, and murder at the hands of Asian Bolsheviks, only to meet a merciless death from Winston Churchill's explosive and incendiary bombs and phosphorus.

Later, in Aachen, after all values had been reevaluated, history-less pompous figures celebrated Churchill as a great European and awarded him the Charlemagne Prize.

During my further stay in the Reich Chancellery, Adolf Hitler again led officers and men whom he esteemed to the Linz model and explained his urban planning. Everyone was impressed, if only because they were seeing the Führer in a field that had previously been closed to them.

I considered my task fulfilled, and my discussions with Bormann and the relevant military authorities of the OKW regarding the Stol-483

len protection system for the Berghof and the associated facilities of the alternative headquarters on the Obersalzberg were complete. During afternoon tea, I informed Adolf Hitler of my departure.

No, he decided, he asked me to stay, he still had a lot to discuss with me. Did I know that Colonel Rudel was lying in the Zoo bunker with his leg amputated? Yes, Colonel von Below had told me.

"Go and see him tomorrow, give him my regards, and talk to him! Get to know him personally and report back to me!" Colonel Rudel was in the military hospital of the powerful protective bunker at the zoo. He was surrounded by fellow airmen and young women. I conveyed the Führer's greetings and congratulated him belatedly on the highest award for bravery. Then I was just a listener to the lively conversation in which Rudel participated attentively until the doctor appeared and declared visiting hours over. After the farewell commotion, I was able to talk to him briefly in peace and ask him a few questions:

What should I report to the Führer? How do you feel, judging by the conversation: fresh and confident?

Confident, yes! But still with some concern—I hope I can fly again soon!

With one leg?

"I'll manage! My place is at the front, especially now, when German soil needs to be defended. I can't abandon my squadron, my comrades!"

I tentatively asked whether he knew what task awaited him with the Führer. No. Rudel said that the Führer understood him completely: he would not refuse him further service at the front.

When I reported to Adolf Hitler that evening, he shook his head thoughtfully and said, looking at me: "Now is not the time—

I will now assign Colonel Rudel a new, important task in the air force. I am sure he will master it."

In the evenings and at night, Adolf Hitler spoke about political, world affairs, social, and military issues. He spoke in a focused, intelligent, often visionary, and Promethean manner. During the war years, especially in his lonely times, I was his conversation partner, mostly on topics such as spatial planning, environmental design, architecture, and urban planning. I was surprised by the topics he summarized in his theses;

I was fascinated by his wealth of ideas and his creative power.

During an interruption—he was asked to take the phone—I said quietly to Bormann: "That must be recorded, it is of the utmost importance!" Bormann replied: "I've been trying to do that for some time now."

The tense hours in the command bunker of the old Reich Chancellery turned into days and nights without transition. The passage of time was marked only by military situation reports, but even these were irregular, as were the interruptions for short, extremely simple meals. Despite the constant coming and going of generals and officers from all branches of the armed forces, there was no sense of hectic activity in the bunker. Everything was tightly organized, with concise instructions and attentive adjutants.

On February 22, my brother called me from Munich: "I have terrible news for you. Pull yourself together, be strong, and listen: Our dear mother has been seriously wounded by American low-flying aircraft!"

No, there's no hope. Our aunt, who was with her, died immediately. Please come as soon as possible.

Our mother was on her way to us, her sons, with her sister after our parents' house had been bombed. It took me a long time to compose myself, then I said goodbye to my comrades at the Führer's headquarters and went to the situation room in the New Reich Chancellery to report to Adolf Hitler.

I stood in the large hall, below me was the basement room with the Linz model. It was getting dark, candles were brought in, the electricity had gone out. The large doors opened and Adolf Hitler saw me. He came up to me and shook my hand: "I know, Giesler, your mother."

I would like to sign out, my Führer, I am taking the next train to Munich. "No, I will not leave you alone now, come with me."

He led me into the situation room. I saw and heard, and yet I didn't. What remained was the unreal room, bathed in candlelight, the Führer, the table with the maps, the tense faces, the officers' uniform mirrors, the crosses of the medals, hands gesturing, voices, reports, harsh, commanding words.

I saw and heard it all, because it was the present, the here and now. And behind it lay the dark space, as uncertain as the future. I felt as if

I had already experienced or dreamed all of this, full of oppression. It was the memory of that evening on the Berghof in February 1941. Instead of the peace we had hoped for, there was the looming danger from the East. Back then, too, it was the flickering light in the dark, dimly lit room, where Liszt's Préludes sounded like a fateful prelude. I thought of my mother.

The briefing was over, and I walked back to the bunker beside the Führer. He said, "Kaltenbrunner is leaving for southern Germany tonight. He will take you safely to Munich. Your brother will be notified."

"After all this, I want to become a soldier, and I beg you to let me."

"No, you served as a young volunteer in the First World War.

You will remain my architect. I have enough soldiers, if only they and their leadership remain steadfast and fight.

A little later, Kaltenbrunner arrived. I said goodbye. Adolf Hitler
He shook my hand and, as he had done many times before, placed his left hand on
my arm without saying a word. I looked Adolf Hitler in the eyes for the last time.
In 1946, Colonel General Alfred Jodl said the following about Adolf Hitler before the
Allied Tribunal in Nuremberg:
"He acted as all heroes in history have acted and will always
act. He allowed himself to be buried in the ruins of his empire
and his hopes. Let those who wish to condemn him do so. I
cannot."

146.2

Dipl.-Ing. Zeibig fell in Kurland.

146.3 ?

Dr. Ing. von Freyhold fell in 1945 defending Nuremberg. 148 ?

The Local Building Commission was formed from the Electoral General State Directorate and the former Royal Local Building Commission, which was subordinate to the government.

According to the rescript of 1804, an authority without which the crown prince and later King Ludwig I would not have been able to realize his bold construction plans and without which his streets, squares, and buildings would not have been preserved in their original form.

152 ?

Giesler comments: "Looking back today, one might be tempted to speak of a completely new principle of urban design and planning, right down to the individual design

in urban space. Despite the indispensable precision of official work, it was possible at that time to mobilize all the forces of creative talent.

Today, wherever one looks and listens, there are complaints about the loss of urban design. People speak of desolation, recognize the growing danger to the community, and call for a humane city. It could have been realized; the paths to it were laid out, but they were ignored.

156 ?

See note 98

162

On this, Giesler wrote at the time: What seemed absolutely urgent to us then (1940) has still not been achieved today, 35 years later. The chaotic conditions have not disappeared. Year after year, they are lamented in the newspapers, on the radio, and on television.

164

Giesler in conversation: I don't know whether a road of this design has been built anywhere at all in the meantime. If not, then it would have to be concluded that ? apart from motorway construction, in terms of their commitment to the German region and the environment, ? the urban development of the road has been neglected. And this has been the case since the work of Prefect Haussmann over 100 years ago, ? even though the technology of our time would have provided all the necessary conditions.

170 ?

The author was given a sketch in 1975. After many drafts and work on the overview model, this sketch by Giesler from May 1939, drawn on an envelope during a conversation, served to explain the idea of the main station. The person with whom he was talking at the time dated it and kept it.

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"A madman who, realizing that he lacks the ability to build a temple, wants to prove to the world that he can at least set it on fire," Irving, Dresden, p. 253.

Helmut Sündermann: Deutsche Notizen 1945/1965, Leoni 1965, p. 268ff. 484

The English historian Trevor-Roper published part of these conversations with a remarkable, albeit thoroughly disparaging, introduction.

See H. R. Trevor-Roper: The Testament of Adolf Hitler, London 1961. 486 ?

War Diary of the High Command of the Wehrmacht 1940-1945 Vol. IV, Frankfurt 1961, p.

1721, quoted from H. Sündermann, Das Dritte Reich, Expanded New Edition, Leoni 1964, p. 241 f.

522

Illustrations

B1 Development on the banks of the Danube. View across the old town of Linz towards Urfahr. From left: Technical Town Hall ? Town Hall ? High-rise building for the district ?

Reich Governor's building? Square on the Danube with Gau leadership, Hall of the People's Community, and tower on the Danube. In the foreground on the left, Adolf Hitler's retirement home.

B2 Development on the banks of the Danube, view towards Urfahr: Hall of the People's Community with tower – architectural gardens – galleries. In the foreground, the KdF high-rise hotel, followed by the "Basar."

B3 Danube bank development, view towards the Technical University on the Linz side. In the foreground, galleries, exhibition halls, concert hall, and architectural gardens.

B4 Detail of the model of the Technical University with the auditorium.

B5 Ordensburg Sonthofen/Allgäu. The palace under construction? 1935/36.

B6 Ordensburg Sonthofen/Allgäu. Common room? Arcade. B7 Weimar.

Model of Adolf Hitler Square with the Hall of the People's Community. In the foreground, the museum with Preller's frescoes. Competition 1935/36

B8 Weimar. Model of Adolf Hitler Square. In the foreground: German Labor Front building. Competition 1935/36.

B9 Prometheus in front of the Hall of the People's Community in Weimar. Based on the poem by Goethe. Sculptor Arno Breker.

B10 Hotel Haus Elephant in Weimar. 1937/38. View from the market square. Adolf Hitler's living quarters.

B11 Hotel lobby with view of the breakfast room. Hotel lobby with view of the entrance.

B12 The tower for the Augsburg Forum with the entrance front of the town hall. Model 1938.

B13 The Augsburg Forum seen from the railway station side. City hall with tower ?
Gau leadership. Model 1938.

B14 The Augsburg Forum seen from the main street.

B15 The Hohe Schule on Lake Chiemsee seen from the lake side. Model 1938.

B16 The Hohe Schule on Lake Chiemsee seen from the land side. Model 1938.

B17 Buildings on the Obersalzberg: The "Generalshalle." View from the mountain side.

View of the valley with the Untersberg.

B18 Munich. The new main station with the road system to the east and west.

B19 Top: The station on all sides – individual transport over mass transport.
Center: The lowered track bed – the technical station. Bottom: The transparent station from the west.

B20 The "Große Straße" with the main station. Model section 1939/40. B21 View of the main station, with Arnulfstraße in the foreground. The high-rise buildings at the main station: The KdF Hotel, behind it the "Eher-Verlag" publishing house.

B22 Main station. Partial section of the hall.

B23 Station hall: section through the polygonal dome. Steel structure and stairs.

B24 The main station dominates the end of Große Straße without obstructing traffic flow to and from the west. The station square is framed by the two high-rise buildings.

B25 Adolf Hitler carefully checks all the details on the models with his architect. (High-rise Kraft durch Freude hotel on Bahnhofspatz). B26 Construction models of the main railway station.

B27 At the model of the "Große Straße." The new opera house based on Adolf Hitler's designs and created by Prof. Brinkmann. The last glance in the studio was always directed at the party monument.

B28 Discussions around the model and plans. Top: Schaub, Hitler, Giesler, Morell, and Wünsche. Bottom: Schaub, Hitler, M. Bormann, and Giesler.

B29 Party buildings on the east-west axis in Munich. Top: View of the DAF building, exhibition halls in the foreground. Bottom: The "reception" in the west by the SA forum.

B30 The party buildings on the east-west axis are being discussed. (Hitler, M. Bormann, Giesler.)

B31 Adolf Hitler in Linz: "Giesler will give the river its banks, then one will be able to say with good reason, 'Linz on the Danube!'" (Giesler, Speer, Hitler, Prof. Roderich Fick.)

B32 Giesler: "I took Adolf Hitler's words to heart!" Speer, on the other hand, felt that it was "as if it were all a grandiose game with building blocks," as he wrote 30 years later.

B33 Discussions on the working model of the Donau riverbank development: Everyone points to the high-rise building. Considerations? (From left: Eigruber, Hitler, Giesler, Ganzenmüller, and Fick.)

B34 Working on the plans for Linz: Bormann is always present, often accompanied by the Linz Gauleiter Eigruber.

B35 Adolf Hitler's building ideas take shape.

B36 Overview model of the Danube riverbank development. View upstream. On the right is the Urfahr side. At the top center: Hitler's planned retirement home. B37

Inside the Invalidendom. June 24, 1940: "Giesler, you will build my tomb."

B38 In front of the Invalidendom. Breker, Giesler, Speer.

B39 The view over the Danube. The Linz commission.

B40 "A long, deep, dreamlike gaze..." Adolf Hitler at the Linz model. February 1945, Reich Chancellery bunker.